

# INVITATION TO LOVE

*By*

**LEO A. CORMICAN, O.M.I.**

Invitation to Love by Leo A. Cormican, O.M.I

Nihil Obstat:

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Imprimi Potest:

Joseph R. Birch, O.M.I.

Superior Provincialis

Imprimatur :

Ottavae, die 2a Novembris, 1954,

M. J. Lemieux, O.P.

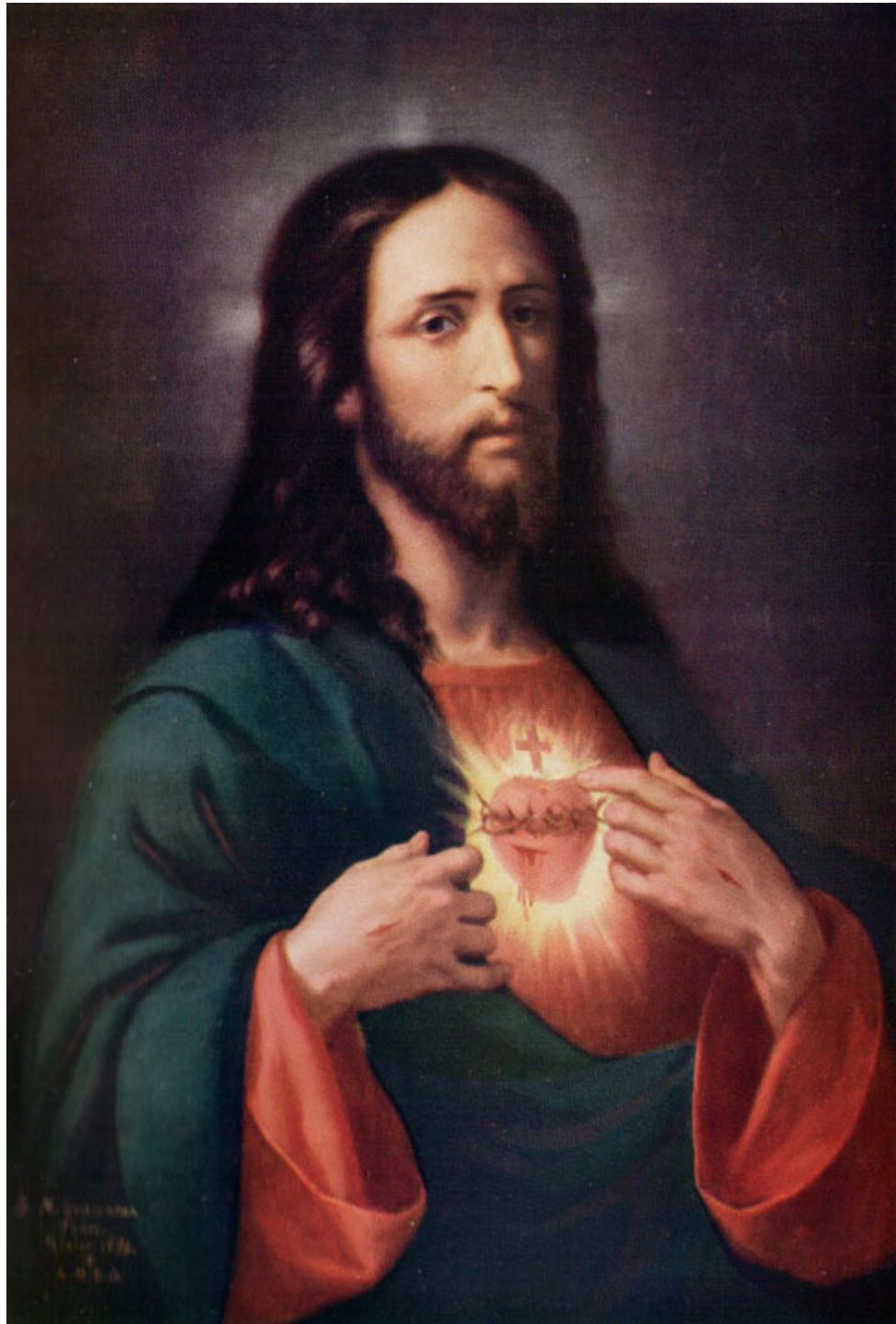
Archiepiscopus Ottaviensis..

Originally printed by: Le Droit, Printers and Publishers, Ottawa, Canada

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Passages are quoted from the following papal encyclicals:

*The Sacred Heart (Misericordissimus)*

*The Kingship of Christ (Quas Primas)*

*The Liturgy (Mediator Dei)*

*The Mystical Body of Christ (Mystici Corporis)*

# I

## GOD'S QUEST FOR LOVE

Of all the lovers who have caught the imagination or stirred the hearts of men, the greatest by far is Christ. No other has ever hungered so eagerly for love, nor found the road to the heart of the beloved so beset with disappointments and obstacles. No lover has ever suffered so much from human fickleness, coldness, disdain and infidelity. More than any other, He has found that "the course of true love never did run smooth." No one has ever been so patient, so resolute in the face of disappointments, so gentle, so forgiving in the midst of infidelities. The love story of Christ is unique, because the lovers in it are not remote figures who lived in a distant past, nor imaginary people who never lived at all, but the living Christ and our living selves. The bride whose love He seeks to win is the human race. He seeks His beloved ardently not because her beauty draws Him powerfully to her, but because she is so ungainly and ungracious that only He can give her lasting beauty and joy; she is so needy that only He has riches enough to fill her heart.

He desires neither a helpless slave nor a mercenary hireling, but a spouse who will give herself to Him as He gives Himself to her- fully, freely, in the unbreakable bonds of marriage. He wishes to force nothing on her or from her, but seeks her ready, complete consent to that unreserved intimacy which can grow only from mutual love. It is only by her wish that He can fill her with all the comeliness and grace He ardently seeks to bestow. His seeking must go on to the end of the world; only then will the number of the elect be filled up, and His lovers present themselves to Him as a bride without spot or wrinkle or blemish (Ephs. V.27.); only then will the hunger of His Heart be satisfied.

Human history is the period of Christ's courtship; until history has passed into eternity, He has the arduous, painful task of winning His bride. He is not hampered, as other men are, by the limitations of time or space. In His search for lovers, He roams over the whole earth, and to the end of time; He is with us all days, as lover no less than as king, to the consummation of the world. By His church, His teaching, His grace, He seeks to draw every human heart to Himself. His bride-to-be little guesses how whole-heartedly she is loved and sought; she pays but little attention to His pleadings or His promises. But neither rebuff nor rejection can weary Him. For the Eternal Father who entrusted Him with the quest for love has fitted Him perfectly for it. He has given His Son a patience that no unkindness can discourage, a tenderness which meets our rejection with compassion rather than with anger, a Heart that meets our slightest response with generosity and ardour. That Heart enables Him now, as it did in the Passion, to surmount the worst that men can do to Him, and to go on seeking the love of men till time shall be no more.

As His great work is to plead for love, our great work is to respond. We are all, even the greatest of us, limited and ineffective in many ways; but however weak we may be in mind or body, there is one kind of genuine greatness we can all achieve—the greatness of an ardent, unreserved love. The first person who grasped the intensity of Christ's appeal for love was His Mother; she became the greatest of God's creatures because she responded most perfectly to His appeal. True devotion to the Sacred Heart was first and best understood by her in whom God took a human heart to Himself. We should try to imitate Mary by 'pondering over God's words in our hearts' (Luke II. 19), so as to see how much He has loved us, and so be prompted to love Him worthily in return. We should endeavour to understand the true nature of devotion to the Sacred Heart.

### *Understanding the Devotion*

Every true devotion is marked by two great characteristics: it finds its roots in solid doctrine, it produces flowers of solid practice. It takes its rise in revealed truth, not in imagination or in sentimentality, and it leads on constantly to acts of virtue. To understand any devotion properly, we must see divine doctrine as the motive and the guide for the devotion we practise; it is useful then to collect in one place some of the main beliefs which lie at the root of devotion to the Sacred Heart.

We must first remind ourselves of the unique and mysterious nature of any devotion to the humanity of Christ. For when we think of doctrine, or teaching, we are inclined immediately to think of words, spoken or written. But the Word on which the devotion to the humanity is based is neither spoken nor written, but is a divine Person who has always been with God, and is God. Christianity is not primarily a matter of embracing a form of belief, of accepting a particular doctrine; it is accepting or receiving a Person. "God, having spoken of old to the fathers through the prophets by many partial revelations and in various ways, in these last days hath spoken to us by one who is Son. As many as received Him, He gave them power to become the sons of God." (Hebrews I.1; John I.12.) The Word of God, sent into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans VIII.3.), is God's supreme manifestation and revelation of Himself. The Incarnate Word is the basis and the source of all true belief and of all salutary action. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a particular way of knowing, loving and imitating the Incarnate Word. Doctrine we need, words and ideas we need; but the ideas, the words and the doctrine are of value only in so far as they bring us into living contact with the Person, the Divine Word. We must study not so much a belief, as a Person; we must love and imitate that Person, that Man, rather than merely exercise our intellects.

The great ways in which the Incarnate Word enters into our daily lives may be put by bringing together the ideas of Saints John and Paul: He in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells in a corporal manner, dwelt amongst us full of grace and truth, and of His fullness we have all received; for from Moses we received the Law, but through Jesus Christ we received

grace and truth. (Col. II.9; John I.14,16,17.) Since Christ is "true God of true God, of one Substance with the Father" (the Nicene Creed), the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, yet in a corporal manner because He has united humanity to His divinity, in order that He may manifest the power and loveliness of divinity in a way accommodated to our weak human understanding. Even as man, He is full of grace and truth, that is, full of the perfections which make Him eminently pleasing to God ("full of grace:"); and He is "full of truth" because He teaches men all they need to know in a way they can understand. Thereby Christ gives us something better than the Law which God gave to men through Moses; that is, Moses could instruct us on what our obligations are, but he could not usurp the function of Christ which is to impart the inner strength and motivation which enables us to fulfill those obligations. Christ, unlike Moses, and *a fortiori* unlike all merely human teachers, works in the innermost heart of man by sanctifying grace and by all the virtues.

The following paraphrase of New Testament texts is offered as a summary of the divine doctrine which underlies the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Since that devotion is a way of honouring the Incarnate Word, it is necessary to see the Incarnation in relation to the whole plan of Divine Providence.

The Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual good in Christ. In Him He singled us out before the creation of the world in order to sanctify us wholly. In His great love for us, even before our creation, He chose to adopt us as His sons in Christ through the abundant riches of His grace. From God we derive our union with Christ Jesus, because He has become to us wisdom God-imparted, yea and justification from sin, and redemption. He has thereby delivered us from the powers of evil, and transferred us to His own kingdom to be ruled by His Son. Being rich in mercy, He has given us life in Christ, and has seated us with Christ in the heavenly places to show forth, in the ages to come, the surpassing riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ.

It was as the great High Priest of these good things to come that Christ was sent into the world to offer for men a perfect sacrifice; what He offered did not belong to the natural creation, it was an offering not of the blood of goats and calves (as in the Old Testament), but of His own blood, thus obtaining for us everlasting redemption. By the guidance of the Eternal Spirit, He offered Himself to God, purifying our guilty consciences from the corruption and death of sin, and elevating us to the service of the living God. This High Priest, Christ, had already in His mortal life all the perfection necessary for this great work and for supplying our needs; He was holy, undefiled, set apart from sinners, exalted above all created things, even the most heavenly; He was so perfect that, unlike other priests, He did not need to offer sacrifice for Himself or for any sins of His own; and, unlike others, He is not removed from His priesthood by death, for, having offered Himself on one single occasion as a sacrifice for the people, He now remains forever and possesses an everlasting priesthood. It is in this way that He can at all times save those who approach God through Him, since He lives on to intercede continually for them.



When He first came into the world (by conception in the womb of Mary), He declared that His one desire was to do the will of God perfectly. He who was the Word of God, equal to God, emptied Himself, taking to His own divine nature the nature of a servant completely submissive to God's commands. He became obedient, even to the point of dying for God's will, nay even to the point of dying on a cross. By His sufferings and death in human nature, we obtain redemption, the forgiveness of sins; for it has pleased the Father through Christ to reconcile all men to Himself, establishing peace between God and men through the blood of Christ's cross.

Christ, by being lifted up on the cross, draws all men to Himself. For all must now feel the compelling urgency of the love He showed us in His death. And those who refuse to return Him love for love must at least acknowledge His power. For, on account of His perfect obedience, God has exalted Him above the highest, has bestowed on Him a name which is above all names; He has subjected all things beneath His feet, and has decreed for us a share in His triumph and glory. We can then truly say that it is out of love that God gave His only-begotten Son to the world, and sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save it, for He is a propitiation for our sins.

For, although He died once, He is now raised from the dead, and death has no more power over Him. It is God's plan to unite us to Christ's sufferings and death, and thereby unite us to Him in His resurrection, joy and glory. By baptism, we enter into a share in His death, and we are buried along with Him. But the purpose of this is that, as Christ was raised from the dead by the power of the Father, so we should rise from the death of sin to the life of grace. If we become one with Him in the likeness of His death, why then we shall be like Him also in His resurrection.

So Christ's work as Redeemer is not yet complete. We must co-operate with Him by joining in His sufferings. Completion will come when Christ has dispossessed every other sort of power and has subdued all His enemies. The last of these enemies is death, which He will overcome in the general resurrection. Then Christ, in His Mystical Body, will be completely subject to God; the evil will be forever cut off from God's kingdom of love (those who have rejected His love will submit to His justice). The work of Divine Providence will be fully achieved.

May Christ then dwell by faith in our hearts so that, rooted and established in God's love, we may be able to comprehend with all His saints the vast extent of His plan and love, to know the charity of Christ which goes beyond anything we can understand, and thus the work of God's love may be fulfilled in each of us.

The foregoing texts emphasize the two basic essentials of the devotion to Christ's Heart: (1) God's love is infinitely abundant and infinitely compassionate towards sinners; (2) such love demands all our love in return. These two truths are phases or aspects of the great truth of the Incarnation.

By the Incarnation God the Son unites human nature to Himself in personal union. This is the greatest possible act of love for human nature that even God could perform. Greater honour and esteem not even God could show for our nature than this. This act of perfect love demands the greatest possible return from man; man of himself cannot make any adequate return; love in return is given first by the God-man Christ, then through Him, by all who are united to Him by love. The love which the man Christ offers God is a love perfectly commensurate with the demands of the Infinite Goodness. Christ the man is full of this love in order that we may receive of His fullness. The Incarnation is an act of Divine Providence elevating and enriching the humanity of Christ, but it touches all men; all men can come to share in the privileges and powers of the humanity of Christ "according to the measure of Christ's bestowing." (Eph. IV. 7.)

While the Incarnation did not change the divine nature, yet certain things became true of the divine Person which would not otherwise be true. He who is eternity itself became temporal and mortal; He who is equal to the Father became subject to the Father; He who is absolute Lord became subject even to men. Men acquired a new power over God because they entered into a new relation to the humanity He assumed. Mary is truly the mother of God, Veronica the consoler of God, and Judas the betrayer of God. Men are admitted to a share of the divine power which destroys sin and the effects of sin. What Christ communicates to us, He communicates through His great universal acts—His *Sacrifice* on Calvary, His triumph over death through the *Resurrection*, and the perpetuation of the sacrifice and the triumph in the *Mass*. We come to possess the degree of grace He intends for us by our union with Him in His death, in His resurrection, that is, by our desire to suffer whatever may be necessary in order to do what pleases Him, by the triumph of grace over the sinful inclinations of our human nature.

St. Margaret herself was very convinced of this connection between the devotion and the love of Christ's cross. She saw, as all the saints have seen, that we can love Christ only in the degree in which we love the cross of Christ. Lest any one be inclined to think her ideal too high, we should realize that the saint was merely proposing what Paul taught, and taught to the generality of Christians: "They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires." (Gals. V.24.) And this in turn is but an exposition of the great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy *whole* heart", that is, with the readiness to strip away all that is opposed to the love of God. Thus the love of the Christ who suffered so much for us is the beginning, the sustaining power and the crowning perfection of the Christian life, of our "life which is hid with Christ in God." (Cols. III.3.)

For the law of the Christian life is the law of growth. Christ desires that the seed planted at baptism should develop throughout life; life is the period of time given to us to achieve the degree of perfection to which we are called. The lowest degree of sanctifying grace is already a dignity and a power which surpass the whole of the natural creation; God wishes that dignity to grow till it ennoble the whole man; He wishes the power to grow till it seizes full possession of man, surrendering him wholly to the wishes of divine love.

The appeal of the Sacred Heart is but a special form of the general invitation to all men to love God, to love God perfectly; it is a special form of the invitation to that perfect love without which no one can enter heaven. The devotion is special, not in the sense that it is addressed to any special class, such as priests or contemplatives, since all are equally called to perfection; it is special rather because it presents God's claims to us in a specially appealing way. No one need hope to travel along the road to perfection any more quickly than the speed determined by God; no one need expect the special gifts (such as visions, ecstasies and miracles) which God keeps in His own hands. But *everyone* is called to the love of the cross: "unless a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." (Matt. X.38.) However imperfect or even sinful we may be at the moment, the love of the cross is an ideal which no one can reject without rejecting Christ. No one, not even Christ, could love the cross for its own sake since it is, and typifies, all that is repugnant and repulsive to human nature. But even the lowest degree of sanctifying grace supposes the readiness to embrace anything, however painful, in order to avoid offending God grievously. And from there God wishes to lead us on to the love that gladly embraces any pain in order to please God in every way that is open to us. To put it as briefly as possible: we do not need at any moment to *be* perfect, but we do need at every moment to *wish* to be perfect- for the love of Him who has loved us so much. The manner and the degree of our suffering God will reveal to us as we approach Him through generous love. It is He who presents us with the cross, He who gives us the love for the cross, He who sustains us in carrying it till we achieve the final victory.

This practical readiness to embrace the cross- to understand it in the light of divine faith, to bear it in the strength of divine love, to see beyond it to the everlasting victory that hope promises to us- this readiness is what Paul calls the "mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 11.16; Phils. II.5.) "Let that mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. For He, though He was by nature God, ...emptied Himself by taking the nature of a slave and becoming like unto men. ...He humbled Himself by obedience unto death, yea, unto death upon a cross." Or, as our Lord had put it "Everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple; it behoved Christ to suffer and so to enter into His glory, and the disciple is not above his master." (Luke XIV.33, XXIV.46; Matt. X.24.)

Since this "mind of Christ" is so great and precious a power we need not be surprised that it is the gift of God, unobtainable by any efforts we might make by our human faculties. It is set up in us by baptism, strengthened by confirmation, restored by penance, nourished by Holy Communion. It is by these sacraments and by the fervent hearing of Holy Mass that we enter more fully, more intensely and more continuously into the mind and Heart of Christ, so as to possess His habitual dispositions and aspirations. We thereby grow in the power to see with the eyes of Christ, to think with His mind, to feel with His Heart. We are thereby made one with Him so closely that, with the growth of grace, He can lead us wheresoever He wishes; and He wishes to lead us through Calvary to the eventual triumph.

Throughout the long road that stretches between our present sinfulness and our future perfect union with God, we must meet many difficulties; but all the time, we are drawing on the

patience, meekness, obedience, humility, on the immense strength and immense love of Christ. For He is "the way, the truth and the life." (John XIV.6.) He is the way, since "no man cometh to the Father except by Him" (John XIV.6.); He is the truth, since He is "the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world" (John I.9.); He is the life, since He came that we "might have life and have it more abundantly" (John X.10.); He is the 'wisdom of God and the power of God' (I Cor. I.24.), who teaches us all we need to know and strengthens us to do all we need to perform. In His Heart are all the treasures of wisdom and grace; He opens His Heart that we may draw on these treasures as we need or desire. To draw on them we need to enter into His Heart, we need to have our being in Christ, 'to lead the life which is hid with Christ in God'. (Cols. III. 3.) In this way Christ comes to live in us more and more fully. And so we have that unique phrase, the *Christian life* which includes in its meaning the life of the Christian and that of Christ at the same time. For the Christian life is not merely a life that *we* lead- it 'is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us'; what enables us to lead the Christian life is the 'Christ who dwells in our hearts by faith' (Eph. III.17.); the actions of the Christian are not so much the actions he performs by his powers, but rather the fine flowers and fruits of the Vine which flourishes within him.

For Christ the Vine to flourish within us, we must understand what Christ wishes of us, we must have the 'mind of Christ'; and we learn His mind from His Heart. Even in human affairs, love brings us inside another's mind with an insight unparalleled by any other form of knowledge. It is love, setting up in us a fellow-feeling with Christ's Heart, that shows us what is in His mind. Devotion to His Heart is not reserved for special persons, occasions or actions; it is a matter of trying, even in the simplest things, to carry out what is in Christ's mind for us, to find opportunities to love Him who has loved us so much. Winding an alarm clock is an act of devotion if we do it to ensure our punctuality at Mass or work — for He gives us work, as He gives us the Mass, that through it we may grow perfect in love; eating a meal becomes an act of true devotion if we try to find in it the strength to do Christ's work. Whatever our present imperfection or sinfulness, true devotion must *aim* at co-operating with Christ that the divine life He purchased for us on Calvary and bestowed on us in baptism may come to the fullness He wishes to give us.

## II

# UNDERSTANDING CHRIST'S HEART

Words are important, not because of themselves, but because of the things for which they stand. They are consequently important in proportion to those things—the greater the thing, the greater must be our care in using the word. To know the exact meaning of a word is not the exclusive concern of the scholar. Everyone is interested in the right meaning of words—when those words stand for things he considers important: the doctor does not confuse *infectious* with *contagious*; the biologist distinguishes between *congenital* and *hereditary*, the informed Catholic between *infallible* and *impeccable*. It is only right then that, if we wish to have a true devotion to the Sacred Heart, we should try to know the meaning of the word *heart*. We need, however, to remember that such a word, dealing with human affairs, has not the same fixity of meaning as *triangle* or other purely scientific terms. For the world with which science deals remains always the same, while "human" terms describe things and conditions in a human world of thought, feeling and wishing which is constantly changing. Human terms often gather to themselves a wealth of meaning, as the word *democracy* has done in our own day.

### THE WORD "HEART" IN SCRIPTURE AND LITURGY

Probably no single word has been so enriched in meaning by usage as the word "heart". Even in Scripture (where it is a key word) it has not one but very many meanings. This multiplicity will result not in confusion but in greater fullness of suggestion and connotation, if we are consciously aware of it. We cannot hope to clear up the meaning of the word perfectly, because it contains that profoundest of natural mysteries—the mystery of free will. Yet an examination of the word will be helpful, since its meanings call attention to the main points of a true devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The most "material" sense in which the word is used is the 'physical interior' of anything; thus the Book of Exodus (XV.8.) speaks of the 'heart of the sea', and Christ (Matt. XII.40.) of the 'heart of the earth'. This meaning is closely allied to the purely literal sense of the physical heart in the human body; this purely literal sense is, however, rather rare in Scripture, as the word usually denotes the heart as the centre of emotion and desire. In its commonest meaning, the word denotes our inner world of thought, wish and feeling considered as a single whole. "The Lord knoweth the secrets of the heart." (Ps. XLIII.22.) "Mary pondered all these things in her

heart." (Luke II.19.) Sometimes the emphasis falls on the intellectual part of this inner world, sometimes on the affective or volitional part. "The heart of the righteous shall ponder what to answer." (Prov. XV.28.) "Give to thy servant an understanding heart." (3 Kings III.9.) "Neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them who love Him." (I Cor. II. 9.) Here the emphasis is on the intellectual part of man; the following illustrate the affective part: "Lust not after her beauty in thy heart." (Prov. VI.25.) "He shall give thee the desires of thy heart." (Ps. XXXVI.4.) "The Lord is nigh unto the contrite of heart." (Ps. XXXIII. 19.)

From this meaning of the inner world of wish and thought, the word easily comes to mean habitual disposition of mind: 'A merry heart is a good medicine.' (Prov. XVII.22.) 'Before destruction, the heart of man is haughty.' (Ibid. XVIII.12.) "I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. XI.29.) In this sense the word may denote the natural fickleness of human disposition or the need of the heart to be guarded and strengthened by God. "There are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord shall stand." (Prov. XIX.21.) "The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord as are the courses of water." (Prov. XXI.1.) "I will put my laws in their heart." (Jer. XXXI.33; Hebr. VIII.10.)

As the heart is the seat of affection and wish, the word often denotes the inclination to manifest exteriorly the inner thoughts, feelings and desires. "Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts." (Matt. XV.19.) "The heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness." (Prov. XII.23.)

In the liturgy (even apart from the Psalms) the word occurs frequently. Its commonest meaning is the inner world of thought, wishing and emotion as a single whole. Thus in the collect of the Mass of the Holy Ghost, the three elements are blended: "O God who didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation." If it had not been for so long embedded in the liturgy, we should be surprised at the phrase: "instruct the hearts", for the word we would more usually employ today would be "mind". We ask God to enlighten our heart, because we wish to have not a merely speculative or theoretical knowledge, but a highly practical knowledge that will begin to issue immediately in Christian conduct, and the heart indicates the emotions and the will as well as the powers of understanding. As a matter of fact, in this simple phrase from the prayer, we have a practical summary of a very fundamental theological truth: that the only knowledge, speculative or practical, which is meritorious in God's sight and helpful to our salvation is a knowledge which is accompanied by love in the heart.

In the secret of the same Mass, we ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse our heart—to remove the obstacles which stand in the way of effective love; in the postcommunion, we beg Him to make our heart fruitful—to show forth in action the riches and knowledge with which God has endowed us.

It is with much the same purpose that the prayers at Prime quote from the Psalm (L.12): "A clean heart create in me, O God." And in the litany prayers, we seek those holy desires by which we may devote ourselves wholly to keeping the commandments of God with a clean heart and a chaste body.

While the direct purpose of the liturgy is not to teach psychology, still some important psychological truths can be drawn from the liturgical prayers, psychological truths that can help us to elicit something of the full meaning of the "Heart" of Jesus, and help us to practise that devotion in a really salutary way. The liturgy is divine doctrine in the form of prayer, that is, in the form of the actual practice of the Christian virtues, especially the virtues of faith, hope and charity which make up the essence of the Christian life. It follows that the liturgy considers man's mental apparatus, not in relation to abstract principles, but in relation to the actual working of the mind, the actual exercise of the virtues. In this way, the *real* distinction between intellect and will is not indeed denied, but frequently left out of account, since in any deliberate act, intellect, will and emotion normally act together as one.

One of the great psychological truths we find in the liturgy is that God exists and operates within the very innermost recesses of the human heart. He is present to every being by His essence and power; He is present in a particular way to living things since these have the power of moving themselves; He is present in a still more particular way to rational beings since these have the power within themselves of determining their own conduct. He is present in a unique way to rational beings who possess grace, for this grace is really theirs, and it is also a sharing in the inner life of the Most Holy Trinity. By faith, hope and charity, God really dwells and actually acts within the heart of man—his inner world of thought, will and emotion is turned by God into a sanctuary from which God seeks to reign over the whole of man.

And however feeble and inadequate the word "seeks" here may be, it calls attention to this mystery of free will that lies in the heart of man. For to rational beings alone does God give the power of resisting His will. By creating a being who can love Him, God creates a being who can forever refuse to bend his will to the will of God; by creating the possibility of love, God creates the possibility of sin. Human nature in the person of Adam sinned; human nature in the person of Christ is restored to love, to the possibility of perfect and unending love. This restoration implies an act of infinite love on the part of God; it implies an act of total surrender to God of the heart of man. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy *whole* heart." (Matt. XXII.37.) Nothing less than total surrender will suffice, for our whole nature must be transformed by grace, and it will be transformed only in proportion as it is all handed over to God by an act of the heart. We cannot make our surrender to God total or perfect at any one moment—for, even though we might be quite innocent at a given moment (e.g., after gaining a plenary indulgence), our heart is yet, in this world, unstable. What we must strive after at each moment is to make our surrender, our love, ever more and more perfect. It is by such striving that we unite ourselves more intimately to the Sacred Heart; for the Heart of Christ never knew any condition except that of full surrender to the will of God, full love for God, and "of his fullness we have all received." (John I.16.)

The heart of man is then that by which man controls himself, that by which he is most under the control of infinite love, and that by which God establishes His rights over the whole man, and over the whole race. The heart is the meeting place of all the divine graces given to man. Whatever is given to man is given to his heart: 'Son, give me thy heart, let thy eyes keep my commandments.' (Prov. III.1, XXIII.26.) This is as much as to say: you are in the keeping of your heart; let your heart be in my keeping; you will then be wholly in my keeping; then 'thou shalt love the Lord with thy whole heart.' So devotion to Christ's Heart is never complete at any one moment, but by its very nature it strives to become complete.

"Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. XIII.10.) Love fulfils the law because the other virtues are the means by which love establishes dominion over the *whole* man. Love is the queen of the virtues, because they exist that they may be always ready and poised to do the bidding of love. Love calls the other virtues—faith, hope and the moral virtues—into play as they are needed to express and exercise love for God. Wherever true virtue is being exercised, there God is at work, but God using a special instrument—the humanity, the Heart of Jesus, which is the symbol and the cause of all the effects produced in man by divine love. The Heart of Jesus is the centre in which all human hearts are attached to God—attached in so far as they respond to His appeal for love.

### **CHRIST'S HEART AS REALITY AND AS SYMBOL**

To trace in further detail the meaning of the Heart of Christ, it is necessary to distinguish between the reality and the symbol, between what the Heart *is* and what it *symbolizes* or typifies. It is a symbol in a unique way; for the Heart resembles the sacraments in this, that by being a symbol it is a cause. The Heart as a symbol of love is a vastly higher symbol than the rainbow, the image of God's forbearance (Gen. IX. 13.), for the Heart really causes what it stands for, not only representing, but producing divine love in men. This is true since the Heart is inseparable from the rest of His humanity, and His humanity is inseparable from His divinity. This symbol is as unique as Christ Himself.

The Heart, considered as a reality, as a created piece of flesh, recalls constantly to our minds the reality of the human nature, the human soul and body in which He worked out the salvation of all men. Devotion to the Heart is one great way of intensifying our conviction of the fact that Christ really lived among men as a man (Phils. II.7.), that He really suffered as a man, died as a man, and particularly that He lives among us today in our own towns and villages as man—immortal, supreme, but yet man.

As a symbol, His Heart represents both His human love and His divine love for both God and men. His Heart typifies all the ardour and intensity with which He loves His own infinite perfection, and the infinite tenderness and compassion with which He loves men. His Heart shows us the qualities of true love—the qualities of the love with which He has loved us, the



qualities of the love with which we should love Him. His love is *courageous*, facing and fighting all obstacles; *steadfast*, enduring in the struggle, never wearying, allowing no disgust, routine or tedium to interfere with His ardour; *tender*, sensitive even to the smallest thing that is done to Him—the least kindness, the least hurt; *sympathetic*, taking our sorrows and our joys to Himself as His own, for He makes them His own on Calvary; *universal*, excluding no one from the effect of His love (it is men who exclude themselves from His love), excluding no one from any degree of love—it is we who, by our sins and lack of co-operation, limit the degree of love. His love for us then is perfect, and of that perfection His Heart is the symbol.

His Heart is the symbol also of perfect love of God. As man, He perfectly and constantly recognizes God for what He truly is, and is led thereby to elicit three acts, consecration, reparation and obedience. By seeing in its fullness the infinite goodness of God, He is led to consecrate His whole created nature to the love, worship and service of God; He is led to work for a similar consecration on the part of all rational creation. By recognizing the offended justice of God, Christ is prompted to repair, to atone for the ingratitude and evil of men. By recognizing the infinite majesty of God, He is prompted to submit Himself wholly to that sovereign power, and to work towards the submission of all rational beings.

Since Christ is a unique man, He does these three in a unique way. The consecration is His first act in coming into the world. (Heb. X.5.) The reparation, while spread over the whole of His life, takes a special form in the Passion. And by divine decree, He Himself becomes, even as man, the King of God's kingdom. He goes further. He is unique, not only in His own personal prerogatives, but also in His special efficacy in producing like effects in other men—in leading them to the same consecration, the same reparation, the same complete submission to God's majesty. Christ then is King, ruling in the name of God; He is a Priest, consecrating all men to the worship of God; He is a Victim, of infinite value, offered to the justice of God, atoning for men's sins.

To purify us from all sin, to make us wholly submissive to God's will, to consecrate us wholly to God—these are the great aspirations of the Heart of Jesus. To respond to these aspirations is the great work of true devotion to His Heart. That devotion is the great means by which we come more and more under the influence of the great High Priest, by which we submit to His gentle rule as king, and by which we become victims with Him for men's sins. Christ wishes to reign in our hearts by love, and thereby offer to His Father a perfect kingdom, that is, a perfect humanity that has perfectly atoned for its sins, has perfectly reached the measure of divine grace, perfectly loves God. And so Christ and the Christian must continue the work of repairing for sin, of extending the kingdom of God, of consecrating men, as long as that work is needed—that is, until the number of the elect is made up, and time passes into eternity. 'The end shall come when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God the Father, when He shall have brought to nought all principalities and powers. And when all things shall be subject to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subject to Him that put all things under Him.' (1 Cor. XV.24-28.)

"The Son Himself shall be subject to the Father". The future tense does not here refer to Christ as an individual man, since He is, and has been from the first instant of His conception, perfectly subject to the Father. The future refers rather to the "pleroma" of Christ, the fullness of God's design in the Incarnation. Time will come to an end when Christ will have perfectly fulfilled His work of atonement and consecration, and the elect 'attain to full measure of the stature of Christ.' (Ephs. IV.13.)

All this work of completing the design of the Incarnation is the work of love. As each member receives the active power he needs, the church achieves its natural growth, building itself up through love. (Ephs. IV.16.) The body, the church, depends on Christ, depends on love. Atonement, consecration, setting up the kingdom of God—all this is the work of Christ, loving God and loving men.

If we would join in the work of Christ, we must join in His love and be joined to Him by love. When we consecrate ourselves to God, we must do so remembering how much there is in us that cannot, through its sinfulness, be properly offered to God. And the more we advance in love, the more we realize how much that is in us is unworthy to be offered to Him. This will lead in turn to the poignant desire to atone for all sin, in ourselves and in others, that our consecration may be holy and acceptable. By consecration and atonement, in turn, we submit ourselves to the kingdom of Christ—we become truly and fully His subjects, He becomes truly and fully our King. "Christ's office as King is closely bound up with His office as Redeemer and Priest. For as Redeemer He purchased His kingdom at the price of His own blood, and as Priest He offers himself as a victim for our sins." (*Quas Primas*, § 18.) Those whom Christ sanctifies by His atonement, He consecrates to God; those whom He consecrates, He makes part of the kingdom of God. He will continue to grow as Consecrator, as Priest and as King to the end of time; the main purpose of our devotion to Him is to allow His action on us ever fuller and fuller scope.

We may make all this doctrine more concrete by seeing it in relation to the Mass. The Mass is the great act by which Christ continues to exercise His atoning and consecrating power as Priest, and also His authority as King. For in and by the Mass, Christ continues to *atone* for the sins of men; thereby He *consecrates* the race more and more completely to God by sanctifying it; thereby He *establishes* His reign on earth. This reign is not indeed merely a matter of the suasion or attraction exercised by love; Christ really possesses the power to command (and all legitimate commands come ultimately from Him); but He wishes that the obedience to the commands should be primarily the result of love. This is only another way of saying that unless there is charity in the soul, no other virtue is efficacious for merit or salvation; for without charity there is no sanctifying grace, no supernatural life; without charity even the most heroic obedience is dead and meritless. Without charity we cannot fully profit by what Christ does for us in the Mass.

The Mass is then the great act of love by which Christ atones for sin, sanctifies us and rules over us. As we profit by what Christ does for us in the Mass, Christ comes to rule our minds, wills, hearts, bodies—our whole being. (*Quas Primas*, § 42.)

The Heart is thus the perfect symbol and summary of the magnificent plan by which God works out the salvation of men. Christ's authority as King, His efficacious action as Priest and Saviour, His infinite compassion as lover of mankind—all these attributes are typified by His Heart; by His Heart we are reminded of them and prompted to give Him the ready obedience we owe Him as King, the persevering co-operation necessary for redemption, and the constant faithful love He deserves as supreme lover of the whole world.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is built around two things: the actuality of Christ's love for us, the ideal of the love we should have for Christ. The devotion sets up and intensifies those mutual relations between Christ and ourselves through which His love for us and our love for Him is fully exercised. The love of the Sacred Heart is co-terminous with the Christian life; it is perfect only when we give ourselves wholly to Christ and He gives Himself wholly to us.

To speak of Christ "giving Himself wholly to us" may need some explanation. He gives Himself wholly to us from the beginning, since His love is perfect from the beginning. In the Passion He showed us so clearly that He was willing to do *anything* to win our love. But the chief relation between Christ and ourselves is love, and love is not perfect till it is perfectly reciprocated. While Christ loves us with an unlimited and unreserved love, He exercises this love only in proportion as we love Him in return. He acts "*suaviter et fortiter*" (gently and strongly). He will never do any violence to our free will; so when we refuse Him anything, to that extent He is excluded from *our* heart, from working within us, and exercising the effects of His love. He will not give Himself wholly to us till we consent to receive Him wholly—that is, till we love Him perfectly, without reserve, condition or limit.

We *ought* to be devoted to Christ since He has been so heroically devoted to us. The essence of the devotion is Christ's appeal for love and our answer to that appeal. He made His great bid for men's hearts in the Passion; it is by sharing in the Passion that we respond to His call for love. The means by which He exercised His love for us are also the means by which we grow in love for Him. It is here particularly that we can see the devotion, *not* as an added refinement, a spiritual luxury which we might take or leave as we please, but as an integral part of Christ's redemption.

For the very Heart that died for us on Calvary has given us the means by which we can come to a perfect share in His work on Calvary; He has set up special relations between Calvary and the sacraments. So the great manner of practising the devotion is the right use of the sacraments. Baptism gives us an entry into Christ's way of life by giving us an entry into His death. Those who have been baptized have been baptized into His death; we were buried with Him that we might walk in newness of life. (Roms. VI.3.) By confirmation we are strengthened to endure the difficulties and trials we are bound to meet in living anything so difficult as Christ's Passion. By penance, Christ extends to us the fruits of His Passion, forgiving actual sin and weakening the roots of sin within us. Penance removes sin, not only as an offence against the majesty of God, but also as an obstacle to the free play of divine love in our hearts or wills. And penance prepares us to share actively in the Mass, and thereby in the Passion. By taking part in

the Mass, we take part in what Christ did on Calvary—a part which, however mysterious, is very real. And the most active, the most complete way of sharing in the Mass is by Holy Communion. The Church (that is, Christ) commands the priest to complete his Mass by Communion, and strongly urges the people to do so too. Mass and the sacraments are the perfect ways of reciprocating Christ's love, the perfect ways of practising devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The beginning, the middle and the end of all true devotion to the Sacred Heart is then the proper use of the sacraments. Baptism, confirmation, penance and Eucharist—the four whose grace is intended to be spread over the whole Christian life—have special connections with the Heart; it is by these four that the Heart of Christ appeals to every Christian for love; it is by these four that every Christian heart can answer that appeal. We need not, of course, restrict our devotion to the sacraments; the church has given the warmest approval to honour paid to Christ's Heart, and to acts of consecration. But these latter forms of devotion are important mainly because they help to produce the right dispositions of mind for approaching the sacraments, and for drawing out the full benefit from the sacraments. And the more we have of these right dispositions, the more powerfully will the love of Christ work on us and in us through the sacraments. The right dispositions are all summed up in love; it is love that makes the reception of the sacraments acts of true devotion to the Heart.

Two conclusions follow immediately. Whoever receives the sacraments in the state of grace has divine love, and so is practising the devotion, even though he may not think of it in these terms. In this sense the church has always inculcated and practised the devotion. But secondly, we must note, the more prominent the love-motive becomes, the more explicitly the sacraments become devotion to the Sacred Heart. It is possible to receive the sacraments out of routine, out of a kind of business-like desire for spiritual self-improvement, or simply because we are commanded to do so. But the higher motive is to cleanse away from our heart all obstacle to the full dominion over us of the love of Christ. The sacraments become an explicit part of the devotion in so far as they are explicit fulfillments of the primary law of love—that we must love God with our whole being. In fulfilling this law, we tend to eliminate every motive other than the goodness of God who deserves to be loved for His own sake. Or, to put it more concretely, the Sacred Heart instituted the sacraments primarily to enable us to love, and to appeal to us for love; they are His abiding acts of charity towards mankind; the more we look on them as effects of *His* love, the more they become causes of *our* love.

These four are ordinarily successive in time—we pass from baptism to confirmation, and then to penance and to Holy Communion. We must however be on our guard against looking on baptism as a sacrament which, once received, can be thought of merely as a past event. Those sacraments which can be received only once are intended by Christ as sources from which we can continue to draw grace throughout our whole lives; baptism and confirmation prepare us for *every* succeeding moment of our lives. If we wish to honour and love the Heart aright, we must use aright what baptism and confirmation give us—the power to "walk in newness of life" by faith, hope and charity, the power to fight manfully against all obstacles. The end to which these sacraments are directed is a perfect Communion in which Christ gives Himself entirely to us and

we give ourselves entirely to Him—the perfect Communion of the Beatific Vision. The end or purpose of the Christian life is the setting up of perfect relations between Christ and the Christian. Since all these relations are contained in love, devotion to the Sacred Heart is co-terminous with the Christian life. Let us now look at the mutual relations that should exist between Christ and ourselves.

There are two phrases in the preface of the Mass of the Sacred Heart which concretely sum up the proper relations between Christ and ourselves: "largitatis sacrarium" (a sanctuary of divine generosity), "paenitentibus salutis refugium" (a refuge of compassionate salvation to the penitent). Generosity and compassion are the two great traits of the Sacred Heart in His dealings with us; they should be ours in dealing with Him.

### *Generosity*

Christ is generous towards us. The Passion and the Mass are the transcendent *reality* and the divine *symbol* of Christ's endless generosity. He held back absolutely nothing, but, for our sake, surrendered Himself wholly to God's will in a perfect act of infinite generosity. Not even He could make an offering more perfect. We must respond with a like generosity—with a generosity that will show itself in practical gratitude for all He has done *for* us, and in complete self-surrender to all He wishes to do *to* us. This self-surrender and gratitude will prompt us constantly to do all we can for Him.

Such generosity towards Christ is a great practical safeguard in the Christian life. It develops a holy dread of sin, keeping us away from the occasions even of venial sin; it stirs us to beseech Christ for help in temptation; it urges us to repent immediately of sins committed (for generosity does not preserve us from all sin); finally it enables us in practice to distinguish the humility which realizes its own nothingness from the laziness which is content with its own weakness. How many Christians suffer from retarded spiritual growth, because they take too low a view of what Christ expects of them and of what they could do united to the strength of Christ. Contentment with mediocrity is not what it is often mistaken for—a practical judgment of our own limitations or a prudent middle course between sin and saintliness; mediocrity is a slur on Christ's generosity and a contempt for His promises.

### *Compassion*

Christ, and the Christian, show generosity most effectively in compassion. Christ had compassion on us, on our sins; "while we were yet sinners, Christ died on our behalf". (Roms. V.8.) We must have compassion on Christ, on Christ suffering for our sins. The huge range of Christ's compassion on man is given in the three terms used in the preface to describe His

kingdom: justice, love and peace. If we do enjoy these three goods to any extent, if we may hope for their increase, it is because Christ has taken such profound pity on mankind smitten with sin, hatred and conflict. It is by spreading justice, love and peace that we can take compassion on Christ and on suffering humanity.

### *Justice*

Christ *is* our justice, our justification. Not merely has He been just towards us, but He conferred justice on us when, through baptism, He raised us up from the death of sin. "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, God Who is rich in His mercy brought us to life with Christ." (Eph. II.5.) Christ is now our justification in the eyes of the Father. He destroyed the decree that was written against us, nailing it to the cross, so that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ. (Col. II.13; Roms. VIII.1.) If we are in Christ, we are in His love: to the extent we love Christ, we are one with Him, and the Father cannot condemn those who are one with His own divine Son. Christ freely bestowed justice on us; the least we must do is to be just to Christ, giving Him all the service and obedience which is His due. And we can go further. Like Christ, and by Christ's power, we can produce justice in the world; we can do our share towards justifying men from their sins. To use this power of reconciling man to God is to have compassion on the whole body of Christ which is the church. The ordained priest exercises this power in a special way, but it belongs to the church which as a whole possesses a royal priesthood. (1 Pet. II.5.)

### *Love*

In the actual dispensation of God, however, love is still the great force, and justice cannot be conferred on men or spread through the world without love. We cannot understand Christ justifying man unless we see Christ loving man. If Christ is led to justify us, and to justify us in the special manner of Calvary and of the Mass, He is led by the greatness of His love. All this justification of man is the work of God, who is "rich in mercy", and has saved us "by reason of the great love wherewith He has loved us." (Eph. II.5.) Our dealings with Christ similarly must not be confined to justice; our power to co-operate with Christ in producing justice depends so much on our love. For us, as for Christ, the great driving force must be love. For love sets up far higher and more intimate relations than justice could by itself. Justice prompts us to give another all that is his due; love prompts us to give him all. "If a man take thy coat, give him thy cloak also; if he force thee to go one mile, go with him other two." (Matt. V.40.) Christ here was outlining, not our duties in justice, but the generosity that grows out of love.

## *Peace*

Love gives all. God gave us His only begotten Son, and together with Him has given us all good things. Love has given us not only justice but also peace. By His grace, Christ establishes peace within us—the tranquility of mind or soul that comes from the due subordination of our lower nature to our higher, and the subordination of the *whole* man to Christ by love. In so far as we receive this grace of loving peace, we are changed, and help others to change, from children of wrath to children of God; we are enabled to work toward that universal peace which is the total subordination of the whole race to God. And our power to spread that peace is proportionate, not so much to our influential position, our eloquence or practical ability, but rather to our love. The more we love Christ, the more effective instruments we become in His hands to do His work in the world.

Justice, love and peace are then three great goods which Christ and we possess in common; He confers them on us, by them we govern our relations with Him, and we can work with Him as He spreads them throughout the world. It is only when we unite all three that we can see the true import of each; it is only when we live by all three at once that we can live by any one of them properly. St. Paul, expanding the parable of the Pharisee, counsels us against the attempt to separate justice from love, and almost every time he speaks of man justified from sin, he reminds us that the justification would never have occurred but for the great love God has freely chosen to have for us; our justice is not earned by our works but produced by the love of God. At the same time, we need to remind ourselves that our love for God is no mere matter of ecstatic thrill—it must undertake the stern (and always somewhat unpleasant) task of cleansing us still more from sin and from the effects of sin (guilt and inclination to further sin). "He that is just, let him be justified still; he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." (Apoc. XXII.11.) Love, to be truly love, must spread justice and peace—first throughout our own individual selves, and thereby throughout the world. The work of love is justice and the work of justice is peace. To live by justice, love and peace is to enter into the power of Christ's Heart by which He transforms the world. For love that aims at justice, aims to atone for injustice, for all the sins of mankind. And the more we love Christ, the more we think of sin as He thinks of it; the more we love Him, the more we feel with His Heart, aspiring after justice and peace as He does. True devotion

to the Sacred Heart must then include reparation and must establish a community of feeling between Christ and ourselves. Let us consider each of these.

## *Reparation*

Even without the Incarnation, reparation would have been a duty, imposed by the fact that man had sinned. But through the Incarnation, reparation becomes both more perfect (or efficacious) and a more urgent need.

*More perfect:* At the very instant at which God becomes man, that man dedicates Himself to the great task of making full and perfect reparation to the majesty of God for all the offences of men. Since He is a divine Person, His atonement for sin is complete. And His whole life is intended not only to make reparation to God, but to unite other men to Himself so effectively that they too can make full and perfect reparation—not indeed by themselves, but by Christ acting through them in the Mass. By the immense gift of the Mass, not only the man Christ, but also other men, can offer perfect reparation.

*More urgent:* The most urgent or impelling force is love. The Incarnation makes reparation a more urgent duty on us because the Incarnation makes it possible for us to love God far more perfectly and intensely than we could if we were not united to God in Christ.

As long as we retain any human decency, we are able to see the need for making reparation to those whom we have offended. But our power to perceive the wrongness of what we have done (and the corresponding need to repair it), is in direct proportion to our love. The desire to make reparation to a distant stranger is not nearly so keen or decisive as the desire to make reparation to a loved friend. In proportion as we grow in love of God, we grow in the desire to make amends for all our offences, and for all the offences of others. True love ends by offering itself as a victim for all sin.

Besides, through the Incarnation we are now in the state where our offences are not only against God, but against a man. If, of course, we were to take the two things in isolation from each other, an offence against God is infinitely more serious than one against a man. But the two are not in isolation, because God is now man, and it is impossible to do injury to any man without doing it to God; and we *realize* more easily what it is to offend a man than what it is to offend God—human nature is so well known to us, the divine nature is so mysterious to us.

Our sins have inflicted loneliness, grief, shame on the Heart of Christ. Our sins took up the lash to flog His naked body, our sins imposed on His head the crown of thorns, dragged Him to the Hill, and drove nails through His hands and feet. Our sins have done immediate and personal wrong to a human being; and we can understand much more easily what it is to flog an innocent man than what it is to offend the infinite majesty of God. If we realize that this innocent man is our greatest lover, the urge towards reparation becomes irresistible. Love cannot be satisfied till it has made full reparation for the wrong done. As He took compassion on us when we were lost in our sins and in danger of damnation, so we should take compassion on Him in His sufferings, for His sufferings are what our sins have done to Him. Reparation is *our* compassion on Christ, as His agony and death are *His* compassion on us.

And, although He now reigns in glory, we are still able to compassionate His suffering Heart. "How can we believe that Christ reigns happily in heaven if it is possible to console Him by such acts as those of reparation? We answer in the language of St. Augustine: 'The soul which truly loves will comprehend what I say.' Every soul which burns with true love of God can see Christ suffering for mankind, afflicted by grief in the midst of sorrows suffered for our



salvation... The sins and crimes of men, no matter when committed, were the real reason why the Son of God was condemned to death; even sins committed now would be able of themselves to cause Christ to die a death accompanied by the same sufferings and agonies as His death on the cross. At the present time we may and ought to console that Sacred Heart which is being wounded continually by the sins of men." (*Miserentissimus*, § 16-18.) We still have the power to hurt Him and to console; we exercise these powers whenever we do any wrong to any human being, whenever we do any good. True compassion is not a shadowy, impersonal gesture towards a remote, inaccessible God; it is an act of tender, discerning love for individual human beings. It is a form of love for our neighbour, and must be offered first to our greatest and closest neighbour, Christ—the Christ who is as near to us as our own hearts, in which He dwells by faith.

Reparation is an act by which we feel what Christ feels about sin—the desire to atone for sin, to wipe it out utterly by means of love. To desire to make expiation is to be one with Christ in heart and aspiration; this oneness can be extended till it includes a true bond of sympathy between Christ and ourselves.

### **THE HEART AS THE BOND OF SYMPATHY**

The second great consequence of joining justice, love and peace is the setting up of a bond of sympathy between Christ and ourselves. Perhaps a little cautionary note is needed. Our sympathy is not merely sentimental or merely emotional; if it is to be stable or effective, it must have a basis in the intellect coming from the clear perception of some truth; it must lead to the formation of some practical decision by the intellect and to the carrying out of that decision by the will. It is in this sense that we are asked "*sentire cum Ecclesia*" (to feel with the church)—to judge and act in a way inspired by the teaching of the church in daily conduct, in politics, in social or economic action.

Now Christ feels with us, and we must strive to feel with Him. He feels with us, He feels all that is done to us—so perfectly and so universally that He could say: "Whatever you do to the least of My brethren, you do it to Me." Let us remind ourselves here that God uses no "as if" philosophy, no make-believe—He needs not to act out of imagination. The *manner* in which it is possible for Christ now to experience all the wrongs that are done to men—this is unknown to us; the *fact* that He does—this is of direct revelation.

Christ perfectly "sympathizes" with us—He feels with us and for us in all our trials, difficulties, temptations. His fellow-feeling for us is a phase of His universal compassion for fallen mankind. For compassion is really com-passion, passion with, feeling with another, making the feelings or experiences of another our own, feeling what is done to them in the same way as we feel what is done to ourselves.

The central point of this community between Christ and ourselves is that He asks us to have compassion on Him, to feel with Him, to share His pains that we may share also in His joys.

Having taken on our human nature, He deigned to feel all our human feelings or emotions (because none of them are bad in themselves, and in Christ is found the plenitude of human nature). Even love for woman finds at least an analogy in Christ though He remains ever a virgin in mind as in body; He loves His spouse, His wife, the holy church, with an intensity, an ardour, a devotedness of which the strongest sexual passion is but an image. It was not by any accident that St. Thomas spent his last days commenting on the "Canticle of Canticles"; it was not by any accident that St. Theresa of Avila describes the pains and joys of loving Christ in terms applicable to the highest and best love which a woman can feel for a man. Even the natural, human love which Christ has for His mother is absorbed into, becomes part of, the love which He has for her as a member of His spouse, the church. Mary's love for Him is absorbed into the love she has for Him as the bridegroom of the church. Married love is not the highest love man can have. It is, however, the highest natural symbol of the intensity and ardour of divine love.

For the love of man and woman is the most fruitful kind of human love, the fruit of which is other human beings. And the spouse of Christ is our Holy Mother the Church from whose teeming womb come the sons of God till the number of the elect is made complete. On this divine spouse Christ lavishes His riches, His tenderness, His own divine Self. And mysteriously, this spouse is no mere impersonal entity, distinct from the body of the faithful. It is we, the faithful, who are Christ's spouse. "If any man does the will of My Father, he is my mother and My brother and My sister". (Mark III.35.)

### **CHRIST'S EMOTIONS AND OURS**

Christ is, in a sense, the most emotional of men; His emotions are fine or exact, intense and fully developed—He did not take this part of human nature in vain, any more than He took hands or feet in vain; and His emotions were to be crucified as His hands and feet were. In Him there were none of the obstacles which ordinarily interfere with *our* emotions; He was not held back from feeling keenly, as we are so often, by mere fear of the consequences. So often we do not let our feelings "go", we do not allow things or people to have the full emotional effect they might have—not so much on account of the moral law that bids us restrain ourselves, but because we realize instinctively that emotion might carry us into lines of action of which we are afraid. If we hated iniquity as we should—with the intensity and fullness which iniquity demands—we should commit ourselves to conduct which might carry us further than we care to go. In Christ, the emotions met no such obstacle, because His feelings were always perfectly under His control, and He was willing to accept their full consequences; He loved us unto the end, unto death, unto death on a cross; He committed Himself to one cause with a thoroughness, a whole-heartedness from which the mass of us will always shrink. We naturally dislike to give

ourselves wholly to any one thing, even to the love of God; we hedge, we hesitate, we wish to reconsider our bargains. And all this faintness of heart is opposed to the spirit of Christ: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke XIV.26.) What is demanded of us is a love strong enough to sweep away, if need be, all other loves, a love that will sacrifice everything rather than be separated from its God; for "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy *whole* heart, thy *whole* soul, and with *all* thy mind." We must then learn from Christ to school our emotions—not by merely restraining them, much less by trying to suppress them, but by giving them the full scope, the full fiery energy which they can find only in the fire of divine love.

We need not think of each of the emotions separately; we can give full scope to all our emotions by uniting them to the two basic emotions of Christ—joy and sorrow; for Christ was the most joyful and the most sorrowful man who ever walked this earth. By knowing and sharing His sorrow and His joy, we can come to a full intensity as well as a full control of our own emotions.

### *Christ's Joy*

He was the most joyful of men. He always possessed the Beatific Vision, the greatest possible source of joy. Besides, the things of this world caused Him a joy of which we can, from the very great artists, form only a poor idea. His senses and emotions were finer, more sensitive, more acute than those of any other human being. Wherever He found beauty, goodness, nobility, He responded to them with great joy—because He Himself had made whatever beauty there is in the world, and He understood it so perfectly. Even as man He was the cause of whatever moral beauty or nobility there is, and He knew these things as only the maker can know the thing he makes. The artist finds a joy in the work of his hands which he can communicate to no one because the work is *his* in a sense in which it can never be anyone else's. And Christ was not only an artist, but a perfect artist; whatever left His hands was, in so far as it came from Him, perfect, and capable of giving Him a perfect joy. "God saw what He had made and it was good." Even we can recapture some of Christ's joy in reading what the saints have told of themselves; a love story such as the biography of the Little Flower can not only edify us but move us to approval, to profound admiration and true joy. The knowledge of what took place in the heart and soul of the Little Flower gathered from her autobiography is a weak and poor thing compared with the knowledge that Christ has, for He is the architect and primary workman of all that excellence. Christ had besides one abiding power which is found at best only in a transitory manner in other human beings—the power of retaining fresh interest in the wonderful things with which divine wisdom and love have filled the world. Wordsworth speaks in the "Immortality" Ode of what has bothered so many sensitive minds—the fact that, as we grow up, we lose the capacity for endless wonder and curiosity which is found in the child. To Christ, on the other hand, the glory of the sunset, the richness of the harvest fields, the endless variety of expression in the human face, the endless variety of human character—all the things from which has sprung the art of the world—these things never ceased to be the source of endless joy to

Him. And we may say that Christ has put the musicians, painters, and poets into the world that we too, through these men, may retain some sense of the strange wonders God has created for us, around us, and in us. "All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord." (Daniel III.57.)

What is true of Christ's joy in general is particularly true of the joy He receives from anything that is done for Him. His keen and vibrant Heart responds so readily to any act of kindness or thoughtfulness to Himself; in the Bible story and in tradition He goes out of His way to show His appreciation for little things which are in themselves of no value to Him. Mary the Magdalen spills ointment over His feet in a sudden, surprising gesture of loving abandon; He rewards her with the promise that, wherever He is known, her act also will be known. Veronica wipes His face as He passes to cruel death; tradition affirms that He left the image of His face on the cloth. The more we enter into the sentiments of His Heart, the more clearly we see how deeply He appreciates what we do for Him, even though our gesture, like Veronica's, is almost a gesture of helplessness.

Here again we find one of those paradoxes which run the whole way through the work of Christ; He is eternal and temporal, immortal yet subject to death; powerful yet weak. In the same way, He needs us and He does not need us. As God, He needs nothing, He needs no man; but as man, He needs other men, for it is part of human nature that it is not complete in any one individual (as the angelic nature *is* complete in each individual angel). Man is a social being because he needs other men; and God deigned to assume this need as He assumed the need for food; He assumed everything in human nature which is compatible with His divine Person. He has then freely chosen to save mankind in a way which requires other men than Himself. So the Omnipotent chooses to place Himself in a position in which He needs and can appreciate what other men can do for Him. And, mysteriously, He chooses to continue this need to the end of time.

The Sacred Heart is the great symbol of this need for other men, for a heart needs love, needs sympathy, needs help, needs consolation. The greater our devotion to the Heart, the more clearly and the more constantly we see this need of His for what we can do, and especially His need for our heart, for our love. One impelling motive that runs the whole way through the lives of the saints is the desire to do all they can for Christ; they are not content with fulfilling their duties, they multiply their acts of love. From all things, but especially from these acts of love, there comes a great joy to the Sacred Heart.

Christ is then the most joyful man who ever lived—He has greater capacity for joy and He has more to give Him joy than anyone else.

### *Christ's Sorrow*

But Christ was also the most *sorrowful* of men. He saw, as no one else could, the full, profound horror of sin, its ugliness, foulness, loathsomeness. He saw the constant inclinations to sin in men, even in the best men. He saw the dominion of the devil over men, and the constant readiness of men to accept that dominion and to reject Christ. "All seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Christ's." (Phil. II.21.) Particularly in Gethsemane, He allowed this vision of sin to fill His Heart with bitter anguish. And for Him, this ugliness of sin was not the general, abstract thing that it must remain for us, for He saw all sin, all sins, in all their hideous details; He saw each of those sins steaming up as an unholy vapour against the face of His Father; He saw them descending upon Himself as blows, insults, scourges, nails, agony inflicted upon His own Person. He used His divine power and the powers given to His human nature to prevent this flood of ugliness, shame and insult from inundating and crushing His human heart during most of His life (as a thoughtful man will conceal a toothache so as not to cause embarrassment to his friends). But from the moment of entry into the garden to the last sigh on the cross, He allowed that flood of iniquity to work its full cruel power over His tender Heart.

By becoming man, He placed man in an altogether new relation to God, because man now became able to rejoice and to gladden the Heart of God. The blows of the lashes, and particularly the insensitive cruelty of mind from which the flogging sprang, these things had the power to hurt God Himself. And that hurt was inflicted, not only two thousand years ago by men now dead; it is inflicted by you and me today. We still have the power to rejoice and to sadden the Heart of God, because His Passion goes on to the end of time—though how, we know not.

So Christ asks us, in reparation for our past faults and neglect and coldness, to join Him in His sorrows, to stop the insensitive cruelty we have shown Him; He asks us to return love for love; He asks us to take our stand not with the executioners, torturers and evil judges, but with Mary and John, to join Him in sorrow at the cross; this also we can do, for the Passion goes on to the end of time. He asks us now to share in the profound sorrows of His Heart that we may one day share fully in His joys, or rather in His joy, the mysterious joy of living in the bosom of the Triune God.

We have here a simple way of summing up the essentials of devotion to the Sacred Heart. The essence of it is to give every possible joy to the Heart of the Man-God, and to avoid, as far as we can, giving Him pain; to share as fully as we can in His sorrows that we may share in His joy. To live by this effort is to join constantly, and ever more and more intimately, in the joys, the sorrows, the aspirations of the Heart of Christ. Now the one force that enables us to enter into another person's joys and sorrows is *love*. Love enables us to know others, to know their mind and heart, with a kind of knowledge that can be acquired by no other way than love. Without in any way belittling the formal study of theology, we can say that no knowledge acquired of Christ through books can compare with the knowledge that comes through faithful, persevering love; and this is true even of those who, on account of their duties, are obliged to obtain knowledge of Him through books. Love unlocks the heart, not only of him who loves but also of the beloved, and brings one into the inner recesses of the beloved's mind and heart. This is the meaning of the saying attributed to Aquinas that he had learnt more from his crucifix than from his books.

God the Son gave Himself a human heart that He might as a man enter fully into the human emotions of joy and sorrow; He gave Himself a perfect heart that He might experience all that sorrow and joy perfectly. He gives *us* that perfect heart that we may be able to feel all He feels with His perfect heart. In return, He asks that we give Him *our* heart, not that He would take anything away from us, but that He may fill our heart, as He filled His own—fill it first with sorrow that He may later fill it to the very brim with joy. In proportion as we give Him our heart, He gives us the thoughts and feelings of *His* heart; His heart and ours become one, and Christ and the Christian become one in perfect love. So we can arrive at the highest happiness possible on this earth—a truly personal appreciation of the personal love which the Heart of Christ has for each man.

# III

## PRACTICAL DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART

### HONOURING THE INCARNATE GOD

It is the plan of God that we should live in Christ and Christ should live in us; that is, our whole work as Christians is to be properly devoted to Christ. Devotion to His Heart constantly reminds us how much He loves us, and how much He desires our love in return; for the devotion helps us to realize what He is and what He has done—it reminds us that Christ is truly God, truly our Redeemer because He is both priest and victim, and truly our supreme ruler. Whatever He has done or continues to do, He does out of the love that burns in His Heart; whatever we do to honour that Heart honours all the acts of love that proceed from it. The devotion is a summary of all true devotedness to the Incarnate Word.

### *Gratitude*

One form of honour or adoration which He specially desires is gratitude. For God is truth, and gratitude is a practical way of recognizing the great truth that all we are and have comes from God and is constantly dependent on Him. The first truth that we must acknowledge—in our minds and in our practice—is that God became man. The basic event in the supernatural order—as far as men are concerned—is the Incarnation, the act of divine generosity which brought the divine and the human into perfect union. All else follows from this, and it is for this above all that we should be grateful. The Heart itself is the symbol of the infinite love for man which would be content with nothing less than making man divine. Love—vast, overflowing, infinitely resourceful, never wearying, infinitely tender but infinitely strong—is the source of all that is good in the universe. The devotion honours this love which is poured forth in such abundance.

In the supernatural, as in the natural, order, it is often the really great gifts that we most readily take for granted, and so, forget. The sun, the health we enjoy, the food we eat, are so much a part of our daily lives that we tend to forget that they are a continuing act of kindness to us on the part of God. It is only the constant effort to live by the liturgy that reminds us of the enveloping, constantly renewed generosity of God. We tend to take the Incarnation for granted, as we do the sun. We easily forget that it might never have happened, that no one but God could devise so colossal, so stupendous an act of love. It is precisely this act that we honour in revering the Heart because our worship is directed towards the divine Person who became man. To the degree we practise this devotion in the right way, we make every part of our lives, every phase of our dealings with other human beings, a continual act of gratitude, because we are then, like God, honouring the human nature which He honoured by taking it to Himself.

Our gratitude for the Incarnation is perfectly summed up and practically expressed in the prayer for the Feast of the Most Holy Redeemer (July 15th): "O God, Who hast set up Thy only begotten Son as the Redeemer of the world, and by Him, through the conquest of death, hast restored us to life, grant that by recalling these benefits we may cling to Thee with everlasting love and receive the fruit of the same Redemption, through Christ our Lord." Through true devotion, we may learn to 'cling, through all difficulties and obstacles, to Him who is love itself.'

### *Christ Shares in Our Human Nature*

The Heart of Christ which we honour is the Heart of flesh—a piece of living matter which, like all other living matter, has been created by God. Devotion to His Heart is a constant reminder of the reality of the humanity of Christ, of the fact that Christ lived and died in this world a real man. "See my hands and feet," He said, "a ghost hath not flesh and bones as you see Me to have." (Luke XXIV. 39.) The realization of His human nature helps us in two ways: it brings home to us the limitations which He voluntarily assumed, and it gives us greater confidence in approaching Him.

Out of love for Him, we must endeavour to know the limitations He assumed in assuming human nature. As St. Matthew sums it up so starkly: "He fasted forty days, then He was hungry". He could say: "I will not take a bullock from thy house, for all the "wild beasts of the forest are Mine; if I were hungry, I would not tell you, for Mine is the world and the fullness thereof." (Ps. XLIX. 9-11.) But sovereign and sovereignly independent as He was, He grew hungry for food and tired after work even as we do. God though He was, He was yet a man, needing material things, and consequently hungry for the things He needed.

It is the same need and hunger of our human nature for created things (both material and immaterial) that involves us in constant dangers and difficulties. If we had no need for pleasure, there would be little danger of our committing gluttony or lust; if we had no need for material things, there would be little danger of avarice. For all these sins and vices are the perversions of



needs and appetites which in themselves are inoffensive. The fact that we need certain things, and feel that need keenly, tends to give these things a certain power over ourselves, enables them to exercise a certain fascination which they could never have if we did not need them. Christ is the perfect example of a man who felt the need for food, for companionship, for shelter, but who never became subject to the things He needed—His Heart always remained sovereignly free in the midst of the attraction He felt towards food, drink, companionship, comfort and honour—He desired all these things only in so far as His Father wished Him to use them for His Father's glory. So we have co-existing in the Sacred Heart perfect love for created goods and perfect detachment from created goods.

The more fully we realize that Christ is a man, the more ready shall we be to approach Him for whatever we need. To believe in the Incarnate Word is to believe in a being who is God and man at the same time; true belief will remind us of His infinite glory and majesty, of the awe and profound reverence we owe Him; but it will always remind us of His nearness to ourselves as a man, remind us that He is the most thoughtful, considerate and benign of men, that He forestalls our every wish, and is likely to grant our requests in proportion to the confidence with which we expect to receive from Him. Open wide thy mouth and I will fill it; come to Me and I will refresh you; you shall ask whatsoever you will, and it will be done unto you. (Ps. LXXX.11; Matt. XI.28; John XV.7.) We need have no hesitation in approaching a God who has taken such pains to make Himself accessible.

Among the many things which Christ needs (that is, chooses to need in order to help us realize His humanity) what He needs most is other human beings, our selves, our love. Taking a human heart to Himself, He took with it the hunger of the heart—the hunger to be loved. Devotion to His Heart fixes in our hearts the wonderful conviction that, miserable and weak and sinful as we are, the God of all wisdom and of all goodness needs us. And we can really give to Christ what He really needs. The more we are penetrated with this conviction, the more are we convinced of the reality of the human nature of Christ, and the better position are we then in to draw from His humanity all the benefits which He wishes to give us.

The humanity of Christ is however only a means to an end. One of God's great plans in creating the physical universe is that through the visible we might be 'lifted up to the love of the invisible' (Preface of the Nativity), that through the created we might be rapt up to the love of the Creator. Christ as man is the mediator by whom we establish contact with God. We may then desire a deep conviction that He is man in order to come to some understanding of His divinity. Devotion to His Heart can lead us on to the heights of contemplation in which we begin to perceive, dimly indeed in the darkness of faith, but with profound conviction, that God alone is fully real. Whatever else there is in the universe, even the human nature of Christ, exists only as a shadow or reflection of some quality or power which belongs to the divine nature. There is no human formula of words adequate to express this conviction of God's reality, but we can catch it up in such phrases as: "Who is good but God alone?" "If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. VIII. 31.) Or as our Lord is reported to have put it to St. Catherine of Siena: "I am Who am; thou art she who is not."

### *We Share in Christ's Divine Nature*

Devotion to the Sacred Heart not only develops true gratitude for the Incarnation; it also shows us in practice, as in doctrine, that the Incarnate Word is the model, as He is the cause, of all true sanctity. The core of all sanctity is to be "made conformable to the image of the Son." (Rom. VIII.29.) To be made conformable to the image of the Son is the same as to be made conformable to the will of God; and that which essentially makes us conformable to God's will is love. By devotion to the Sacred Heart we recognize the love God has for us, and we try to return that love. In this way, devotion to the Sacred Heart becomes the core of all sanctity, the centre of all holiness. It is only natural that such a devotion should lead us, as it has led all the saints, to that love which embraces the cross—not merely accepts, or is resigned to, the cross, but accepts it in love as the greatest manifestation of love. Christ's love embraced the cross for our sakes; devotion to His love must lead us on to embrace the cross for His sake. Such a degree of love we need not look for at the beginning; but no one, even at the beginning, may spurn that degree of love which is the consummation of our holiness as it is the consummation of Christ's work. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how I am straitened till it be accomplished; for I came not to judge the world but to love the world, and greater love than this no man hath than that a man should lay down his life for his lovers." (Luke XII.50; John XII.47, XV.13.)

The devotion is admirably suited to all spiritual ages—not only to the beginner in holiness, or to the advanced, but even to those who seem to themselves to be lost in sin, and to those who are perhaps in a worse plight—the souls who, having made considerable progress and "tasted how sweet is the Lord", have gone back to tepidity or to mortal sin. For every spiritual disease the Heart of Christ harbours an appropriate remedy, for every weakness an appropriate strength. We need then not be surprised to find among the promises of the Sacred Heart that He will give to sinners, to the tepid, to the saints, the special graces which they need. There is no other devotion which so forcibly reminds us that the saint has the makings of the sinner, and that the sinner has the makings of the saint. Among its other excellences is this, that it compels us to unite the most abysmal humility with the most unshakable confidence.

The Heart is a material thing, a part of Christ's human body; it is also the symbol of His love—it partakes of the very lowest and of the very highest part of God's creation. It is thus the concrete reminder that now, by a special act of divine Providence, the whole of creation is dedicated, consecrated to God. It has pleased the Father to sum up all things in Christ. (Eph. I. 10.) Christ sums up everything in Himself, and, as the Vulgate puts it, restores all things—by giving everything, even the material part of the universe, a new meaning in relation to God's plan for the sanctification of all men. "The fullness of the Divinity dwells in Him in a bodily manner" (Cols. II. 9.), in order that the body of man, as well as his soul, may be holy. Body as well as soul must be offered as a sacrificial victim—offered by chastity, by temperance and by a holy death from which body as well as soul shall arise in eternal "newness of life." (Rom. VI. 4.)

Pope St. Leo sums up the great plan of God for man in the sermon which we read on the feast of the Most Holy Redeemer (July 15th): "The grace of the Saviour restores us daily in a

divine manner since what fell in the first Adam is raised up in the second. The cause of our restoration is nothing else than the mercy of God Whom we would not love if He had not first loved us, and with the light of His truth dispelled the darkness of our ignorance. And so by loving us, God restores us to His image; and that He may find His own goodness in us lights the lamps of our minds and inflames us with the fire of His love, so that we may love not only Him but whatever He loves. The dignity of the Divine Majesty can come to us in no other way than by our imitation of the divine will. We must then in all things endeavour to be made conformable to His will."

### **RETURNING LOVE FOR LOVE**

The central and the constant task of the Christian is to learn to love in the right way; the great advantage of the devotion is that it teaches us this necessary knowledge and provides powerful motives for putting it in practice. We must try to think of the devotion not so much as something we practise, but rather as a seed which Christ sows, a fire which He enkindles in the world. From His point of view, it is an earnest invitation to contemplate, with the understanding of love, the work He accomplished for our sake. It sets before our eyes the riches of the generosity and mercy of Christ, it shows us the full compassion He has had upon our fallen humanity, and the terrible price that that compassion has cost Him. After the events of His life and the institution of the sacraments, this devotion is the great means that Christ has set up in the world for reminding men, especially for reminding priests and religious, how much Christ has put Himself at our mercy, in our power, by 'emptying Himself and taking the form of a servant.' He is now, mysteriously, in a position where He *needs* our love, our tenderness, our thoughtfulness; we are in a position where we can refuse Him, and by refusing can, mysteriously, hurt God Himself. For, as our Lord reminded St. Catherine of Siena, we can be generous and we can be mean towards human beings, and when we are, we are generous or mean with Christ Himself.

If we have ever felt loneliness, or neglect, or misunderstanding, we have some faint idea of the loneliness and neglect which Christ felt—and felt in spite not only of His eternal beatitude, but in spite also of the attentions and devotedness that are showered on Him by His true lovers. For Christ came to save each one, and loves each one, and desires in return the love of each one, as much as if that one were the only soul to be saved. His suffering continues in His Mystical Body till the number of the elect is complete, and the unworthy are cut off finally and for ever, and lose the power to hurt the Head of which they were once members.

For what Christ wants above all is LOVE. He asks indeed for ardent, strenuous workers; He has a place and a role for eager apostles, for diligent administrators, for eloquent preachers, for profound students, for carpenters like Joseph, for housekeepers like His mother. But to all of them He says: "Be zealous for the higher gifts; I show you a yet more excellent way. Blessed is the womb that bore me and the breasts that gave me suck, but blessed rather is he who hears the

word of God and keeps it. Whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother." He asks for workers, but He asks far more earnestly for lovers; He asks not so much that we work hard as that we make our work a work of love, for He will not now call us servants, but lovers. (John XV. 15.) It was not in any exceptional mood, or for any exceptional reason, that He showed Himself more pleased with Mary's rapt inactivity than with Martha's eager service; for what the lover primarily wishes is not service but love; and service itself is important in His eyes only in so far as it is the manifestation of love.

True love, and especially true divine love, is not at all lazy; it will work hard and long, and in the face of every sort of obstacle and difficulty; but this work comes not merely from bustling activity or intense energy that craves an outlet; it comes from the compelling force of love that must express itself in a way appealing to the beloved. And when divine love bids us rest, or sit unmoving at the feet of our Master-Lover, we are just as ready to sit or rest as to work, because all we wish is to hear the voice of God and do it, and thereby be to Christ as His own mother.

True love will no more make holiness consist in hard work than in bodily penance or solitariness or learning, though it will readily recognize that there is a place for all these if love is to have the sway in the world and in the heart of man it should have. And if love bids us sweep floors or wash clothes or keep to a sick bed, we will undertake these tasks as readily and as eagerly as the founding of great institutions, or preaching eloquently to millions, or writing the most profound books. Love is its own law, and judges all things and all actions by the degree to which they contribute to love; so it turns all it does into a work of love and will admit no activity but that which expresses its love.

Devotion to the loving Heart is then the great means of keeping all our activities in proper proportion, of seeing them all at their true value. Love will help us to see that, far more than our works, Christ wants our hearts, and He wants our works only because they give Him entry to, and possession of, our hearts. Everyone, from the Pope to the littlest sister or lay brother, from the most to the least intelligent, can find in His Heart the true wisdom that all work, like all suffering, is important because it offers us the opportunity for an ever-expand-ing love; and it is such an opportunity only because God wills it; and we are His friends and lovers if we do the things He has commanded us. (John XV.14.) Such is the great power of understanding that love confers; such is the wisdom that can never come from theology alone. Love helps us to see that God has planned all the work that is to be done in the world, and has assigned to each one that very portion and kind of work which is most fitted to purge away the dross and make love burn with a purer fire. All murmuring against God, however He may manifest His will, is a frustration of the divine plan to draw us to Himself by love. Being lifted up, He will draw all things to Himself (John XII. 32.); and if we do not wish to be drawn to Him by the 'rod of iron with which He will rule the gentiles' (Ps. II.9.), we must now be drawn by the 'charity of Christ which urges us.' (2 Cor. V. 14.)

That charity will urge us both to do our own work as well as we can, and to value the work of others as highly as we should. We tend to be absorbed in our own work, and to disparage that of others; we tend to forget that we are members of Christ, that we have no meaning apart from the Vine into which we have been grafted. Whether a man be a cardinal in charge of a great diocese or a lay brother in charge of a little door, he can learn the love of Christ which keeps him absorbed, not primarily in the diocese or the door, but in Him who made the diocese and the door, Christ the Lord, Christ who made both only that men might have opportunities to love Him.

### *The Value of Our Works*

The devotion throws a great practical light on something we need to know well—the nature and the value of the works God prescribes for our salvation. As Augustine put it, God created us without us, but He will not save us without us. The work God assigns to us must be valued at its true worth; it must not be over-valued. If we err in either way, we come under the condemnation of the slothful servant or of those to whom it will be said: 'You claim to have preached and done wonders in My name; amen I say to you, I know you not.'

To understand our works aright, we need to keep in mind one of the basic paradoxes of our faith: God demands that we work; God does not need our works. At first sight it might appear unreasonable on God's part to demand that which He does not need. The apparent contradiction is reconciled, as all such Christian paradoxes are reconciled, in the supreme paradox of the God-man, of Him who is eternal and temporal, omnipotent and weak at the same time.

God demands that we work. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel". (1 Cor. IX.16.) "If anyone will not work, neither let him eat". (2 Th. III.10.) Our talents may not be simply buried—they must be put to work. In the actual arrangement of divine Providence, these works and their conditions gather their importance from the fact that they are causes or occasions of grace, that is, of arousing or intensifying our love for God. God does not need any of our works; but He chooses to make His work depend, in a mysterious manner, on our work. The sanctity of parishes does depend, in a measure, on the sanctity of the pastors, though God can act without the pastors, and will one day dispense with each one of them through death. Our work, whatever its nature, must be done with *love*, love that prompts us to put into it all the zeal, interest, and devotedness of which we are capable; it must be done with *obedience* that prompts us to learn and to follow all the conditions with which God invests the work to be done; it must be done with *humility* that makes us realize that, whatever God chooses to do through our efforts, God could choose to do without our efforts. "When you have done all the things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants". (Luke XVII. 10.) One of the two great qualities which Christ urged us to learn from His Heart is humility; humility keeps us from ever setting too great store on our work;

humility makes us see that what is important about the work is not the result produced, but the opportunities it affords of returning love to the Heart of Christ.

And yet the mystery of the Incarnation reminds us of the implied mystery that God *does* need our works—by a hypothetical but real necessity. For, having become man, He decided that His humanity would be subject to the ordinary laws of human nature. To be the son of man, He really needed a mother; to be fed and clothed as a child, He really needed the work of Joseph and the care of Mary. He was not of course under any compulsion to submit himself to these circumstances; but having chosen to do so, he acquired the needs of a man.

Mysteriously, this dependence of Christ on other men goes on to the end of time. The warnings to the bishops of the early church as given to us in the Apocalypse, St. Margaret Mary's report of her visions, and above all the great principle: "As long as you did it to the least of My brethren, you did it to Me", all these remind us how closely the work of Christianity is bound up with the efforts which men freely choose to make. Yet we must always remember that God is dependent on us only in the degree in which He has freely chosen to make Himself so.

This doctrine of the mutual dependence of Christ and ourselves is a doctrine that is to be learnt and truly appreciated not so much by reading and study as by the actual practice of the doctrine in our daily lives. In speaking of a closely similar point Pius XI quotes the words of Augustine: "The soul which truly loves will comprehend what I say." (*Miserentissimus*, § 17.) It is the love of the Sacred Heart which helps us to comprehend how Christ as man is dependent on us, and looks to us to give Him the very best service of which we are capable; it also helps us to understand that Christ the God is sovereignly and eternally independent of us and of our works.

### ***The Works Which God Needs Are Divine Works***

The works on which Christ makes His plans depend are not merely human, not merely the result of human nature, of human industry or ability. The human works which have a divine efficacy are the works of a divinized, a sanctified humanity.

The humanity of Christ is so perfect an instrument of God because it is so perfectly united to God, so perfectly sanctified in the highest union possible between created nature and God—personal or hypostatic union. The same principle applies to us, though in a different manner and different degree. Our works are performed by our humanity—our bodies, souls, talents—but only in so far as our humanity, like that of Christ, is united to God. Sanctifying grace and charity perform for us a function analogous to the function performed for Christ's humanity by the hypostatic union. The source or root then of the fecundity and range of our works is to be found not in their energy, continuity or the ability they show; it is to be found in union with God through love. And all union with God is achieved through union with the humanity of Christ. "For there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." (1

Tim. II.5.) We must then endeavour to develop in ourselves the thoughts and feelings of the human mind of Christ—the sentiment of profound humility, of self-abasement, as His human nature contemplates its elevation to the Divinity; the sentiment of intense gratitude to God, the overwhelming sense of whole-hearted love and devotedness to the commands and desires of God. The human nature of Christ has been in this state of adoration, humility, gratitude from the first instant of its being. "He saith when entering into the world: Sacrifice and offering thou hast not desired, but a body thou hast prepared for me. In holocausts and sin-offerings thou hast taken no pleasure; then I said: Behold, I am come (in the volume so it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will." (Hebr. X. 5-7.) Christ has always remained in this act of perfect adoration; thus His humanity becomes the type of what every other human being ought to be.

Love prompts us then to seek out, not what pleases us, or flatters our natural propensities or abilities, but what pleases our lover. We embrace whatever He assigns to us, in order to intensify love, to make it ever steadier and steadier, ever more and more whole-hearted, to prepare ourselves for the great day of union when our lover will come to set up our love in unshakable firmness for evermore.

Christ asks for workers; He gets so many. He asks for lovers: He gets so few. Those who would reciprocate the love which flows out of His Heart must learn to love Christ more than the works of Christ; and that wisdom will lead them on to the highest love which prefers the cross of Christ to all the pleasures of the universe. For when He spoke of being lifted up, He signified the death He was to die, and it was by that death that He accomplished the work of love. "Let me suffer or let me die", was the prayer of St. Therese.

Whatever takes us towards a more perfect love is a truly Christian act and a true prayer. We are too inclined to think of prayer as a special kind of act, too inclined to think of a life of prayer as a life spent in reciting prayers. The Heart of Christ is a temple from which there ascends a continual and perfect prayer—not primarily or essentially by any words which He says, but by the perfect love, the perfect promptness, eagerness and readiness with which that Heart accomplishes the will of the Father. In so far as we are united to His Heart, we are united to, and come to possess more and more fully, those qualities of promptness, eagerness and generosity, that is, we come to share more and more fully in the prayer of the Sacred Heart. From this life of prayer only one kind of act need be excluded—the act of sin; all else can and should be a continual prayer in union with Christ. Every act that adores and loves God is a true prayer, and every act in union with Christ is an act of adoration and of love. The whole effort to understand and to practise prayer can be reduced to the effort to love God in union with the Heart of Christ. No one can find this programme of prayer too complicated; yet no one need hope to fulfill it without the readiness to dare and to suffer great things for the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts V. 41.)

### *Brotherly Love*

The whole doctrine of the dignity conferred on man by the Incarnation implies the necessary corollary of brotherly love. Since God has set so much store by human nature and restored it by His own blood, He naturally demands that we too should respect and love it. This commandment we have from God, that he who loves God should love also his brother. (1 John IV.21.) The basic importance of brotherly love could hardly be put more strongly than in the words of St. Paul: "He who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law." (Rom. XIII.8.) Now the devotion to the Sacred Heart is the great reminder of this importance of love because it is the great reminder that our brother and our God are one and the same person, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. He that loves not his brother, how can he love God? (1 John III. 17.)—since Christ is both his brother and, his God.

We may note here that the devotion adds nothing new either to the general doctrine or to the daily practice of Christianity. What it does do however is to bring some of the fundamental truths more clearly into focus, and give us a definite way of making these fundamentals a practical part of our daily lives.

To see the vast importance and the vast range of this brotherly love, we may look at a parallel between the natural and the supernatural worlds. In many practical arts, results may be produced accurately and efficiently without any knowledge of the scientific principles involved. A good golfer may be ignorant of the principles of ballistics; a child may touch a switch and flood a room with light without any knowledge of electricity. All that is necessary in such cases is natural faith and natural obedience or docility to instruction. In much the same way one may produce vast supernatural results with little intellectual knowledge of the theological principles involved, but not without faith, obedience and love. And there is no school in which we can learn faith, obedience and love so well and so quickly as in the school of the Sacred Heart. For in that school we learn that all the good and all the evil that is done in the world is done *to* Christ. We cannot perform one deliberate action that does not for good or evil terminate in Christ.

One conclusion of great practical importance that follows from these personal dealings with Christ is an increased horror of sin—of all sin, even the "smallest". Devotion to His Heart gives us a profound and tender insight into, a lover's understanding of, the sorrows and bitterness that His Heart has endured through sin. Our human understanding more readily grasps what sin means to the human heart of Christ because we can contemplate the effects of sin in His body and in His heart. We must bring ourselves again and again to the realization that we are dealing always with Christ. His tremendous statement about the Last Judgment means, among other things, that He will bring time to an end with an explanation of what time was for. The thing that will be made clear—to the bad as to the good—is that the central figure in all time is Christ, and that all other figures can be understood only in relation to Him. Whatever we do to any part of humanity, we do to part of Christ; whatever we use—food, or clothing, or books, or machines—we are using the property of Christ, property which He created that, through the right use of it or through abstention from it, we might learn to love Him aright. There is no part of the universe



that we "use" more intimately than our bodies and our minds; and our bodies and our minds are themselves the property of Christ, for He purchased them with a great price, the price of His blood; they are now part of Him, part of the whole Christ, and may not be put to any use except that for which Christ designed them. And this is true of every man, of every human being. In dealing with men, we are dealing with beings for whom Christ paid a supreme price. God has united the whole human race to Himself by the Incarnation and the Redemption; and what God hath put together, no man may put asunder. (Matt. XIX. 6.) Devotedness to Christ's Heart is devotedness to God and man together.

### **SPECIAL VALUE OF THE DEVOTION TODAY**

We may note also that the devotion has a special value today. The gospel of Christ, like Christ Himself, is adapted to all ages and to all needs; it has a divine variety and flexibility which transcend the limitations of time and place, and also make it admirably suited to every time and place. Each age, like each individual, has special difficulties, special weaknesses. The devotion to Christ's Heart is given to us by God to meet all our difficulties and weaknesses whatever they may be, or however they may arise. "Him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out." (John VI.37.) "The rich he hath sent empty away"; but He sends them away empty only because they wish to rely on their riches instead of throwing themselves on His mercy.

It would be a long task to examine all the dangers peculiar to the present time against which the Heart of Christ offers a sure protection; the following may, however, be briefly considered: the degradation of love, the chaos in the emotions, the grossness of materialism, the misconceptions of freedom and of the dignity of man.

### ***Love***

Probably at no previous time was so much attention given to love, so much said and written about it. Love, like amusement, has become big business; the emotion is played on, to the limit that the law will allow, in order to increase the profits from the movies, the clothing and cosmetics business. It needs no great tenderness of conscience, no deep experience of human nature, to see that the dynamism of human love cannot be let run wild without doing serious damage. The Catholic is living today in a world which believes (in a sense, the world always has believed) that the pleasure of love is an end in itself, a gratification which need not look beyond itself for any justification or purpose. Popular plays and novels and even the public law in places have helped to change this concept of love from the secret belief of a few to the proclaimed conviction of many.

Human love between man and woman can be sacred and noble; but it is capable of producing also gross disorders. Even before it amounts to sin, it can amount to a powerful distraction that steals a man's attention away from his true purpose in life and his relations to his Creator. Even married love has a certain power to distract man from the love of God. A man leaves father and mother, sometimes he leaves also God, to cleave to his wife. Love can lead men into those sins which, though not the very worst, are in a sense the most shameful. Love misused can degrade man to a state which is lower than that of the brutes.

Everybody wishes to love; love must either ennoble or degrade. The devotion to the Sacred Heart is the great guarantee that love can be ennobling—provided it be sanctified by Christ. For the great characteristic of this devotion is to intensify true charity, and true charity is relentlessly opposed to any love that is not ennobling and holy. Charity is not only tender and gentle; it is strong with the strength of God, fierce with the raging fire of God's purity. The devotion to the Sacred Heart is the 'seal that is to be put on the heart and the arm which makes love strong as death and jealousy as inflexible as hell.' (Cant. VIII.6.) True love, so far as we give it scope in our hearts, will sweep away all unworthy, all degrading love.

And the Catholic, especially the priest and the religious, must remember that, in so far as he is imbued and motivated by this divine love, he becomes a force at work in the world, restraining the empire of man's sinful body, holding in check the power of lust to besmirch and degrade human beings. Chastity is no merely negative abstention, no mere denial of natural impulses; it is a positive consecration and a power. It unites us in a particular way to the Heart which knew not merely love for woman, but an indescribably tender and possessive love for the most lovable woman who ever lived. The great love stories of history and drama tell of a love which is frail and feeble beside the love of Christ for Mary. Union with the Heart of Christ is not only a safeguard against impurity, it is a power working within us, but reaching beyond us, helping others in their struggles, and working on mankind till the elect reach that happy state where all other love becomes merely a part of our love for God.

Love of course is not the only emotion that needs to be properly directed and elevated. The world which has so largely ceased to be Christian does not possess the necessary principles and goals which could direct and elevate the emotions. Those who would manage this difficult part of their human apparatus, those who would do something to restore sanity to a largely insane world, must look to the perfect humanity of Christ who is so sovereignly perfect precisely in order that perfection might spill over from Him into the minds and bodies of all men. He will not indeed give us any final or complete mastery over the emotions in this life—they will always continue to be possible sources of danger; but He guarantees us the means of victory in every difficulty, and the victory and peace which are to endure for ever. The Heart of Christ experienced the full diapason of human emotions—partly because He wanted to be one with all men, partly because He desired that we, by sharing in His perfect sorrow, might come to His perfect joy, and in sorrow and joy, all our emotions might be elevated, not to the dignity of the noble man, but to the dignity of the man-God.

## *Materialism*

In the same way, Christ can rid us of our gross materialism and of our misconceptions of liberty. We are animals, and as animals we are always inclined to be immersed in what can be seen and touched and eaten. As Christ has so transcendently shown us through the sacraments, there is nothing ignoble about the material universe; the material, like the immaterial, exists as a demonstration of God's infinite power to call what lies out of nothing. The grain of dirt, like the Archangel Michael, is a proof of the power, wisdom and goodness of God; like the Archangel, it can be brought into being or annihilated out of being by God alone. But man finds the material world, however divine it may be, very difficult to understand aright; because of its nearness and resemblance to him, it tends to engross his attention—in science, in money-making, in pleasure seeking; and whether it be knowledge or wealth or pleasure he seeks, he *tends* to seek it in the wrong way or the wrong degree. The Heart of Christ is our great help here, because His is the earth and the fullness thereof. (Ps. XXIII.1.) Not only as God, but also as man, Christ owns the whole material universe—the harvests, mines, ships, planes, houses, automobiles, and all the other things that men so eagerly desire, Christ owns them all, and distributes them as He pleases. He gives to each of us what He knows is right for us, for He is Eternal Wisdom, and all power on earth is given into His hands. (Matt. XXVIII.18.) It is with excellent reason that He bids us not be anxious about our material needs (Matt. VI.28.) because all things are His and He knows what we need even before we ask Him. (Matt. VI.8.) If we seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, the other things we need will be added to us. (Matt. VI.33.) These phrases are among the best known in the New Testament; they are also among the least heeded—perhaps because we tend to think of them as addressed to special people like St. Francis, or intended for special times like those of the early Christians. We must try to see these great phrases as an integral part of the great invitation: 'Come to Me; My son, give Me thy heart.' (Prov. XXIII.26.) To 'go' to Christ is not to change one's place; to 'give Him our heart' is not to offer Him something He does not already own; to go and to give imply the effort or at least the desire, to disentangle ourselves from whatever holds us back from Him, to break down whatever barrier stands between Him and ourselves. The world of material goods is a barrier—so much a barrier that St. John warns us 'not to love the world nor the things which are in the world, for everything that is in the world is the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life.' (1 John II.16.) But in another sense, the material world is not so strong a barrier—because every particle of it is the creation of God, and He made it for a holy purpose. Christ loved the material universe; that Heart of His which loves all men finds a place also for the flowers, the birds, and everything else which He has created. From Him, from His Heart, we too can learn to love the material universe in the right way, to love it not for its own sake, not for our sake, nor for the pleasure it brings us, but for God's sake, because in its own measure it leads us on to Him and helps us to serve Him.

## *Freedom*

Among the many voices clamouring for and about freedom at the present time, the church and the Christian find it hard to make themselves heard. Christ came that we might be not 'sons of the bond-woman but of the free, with the freedom wherewith He has made us free' (Gals.

IV.31.); if the Son makes us free, we shall be free indeed—provided that we understand where our true freedom lies. Man naturally desires to do as he pleases, he wishes to assert the autonomy of his will—the autonomy which is his greatest natural dignity and danger, the autonomy which makes each one carry his own indivisible responsibility before God, a responsibility which no one, not even our ever-solicitous Mother Mary, can share with us. Perfect freedom is found when a man is perfectly free to do as he pleases; and he is perfectly free to do as he pleases only when he desires fully to do what God pleases. When we have no desire, no expectation, except what God desires for us, then we are fully free; when no gratification or enjoyment has any power to trammel us up, and hold us back from the perfect love of God, then we have perfect freedom. But such freedom cannot be attained merely by desiring it; it must be striven and fought for manfully. As the original sin of our father Adam and the habits of sin around us and in us call to our minds, every desire which is at variance with the will of God imposes some kind of slavery. And this is true of nations as of individuals.

The middle years of the twentieth century have demonstrated, bleakly and unanswerably, that even nations fall into servitude and under the grossest forms of tyranny when they become disloyal to the supreme ruler, Christ. The defence of human liberties and the defence of Christianity are coming to coincide more and more. But the fate of individual souls is vastly more important than the fate of nations; the individual soul need fear no loss of freedom as long as it remains loyal to Christ. And everyone who suffers from tyranny—whether of governments or of vices—can turn with absolute assurance to Christ, knowing that there is no one who can resist His will (Judith XVI. 17.), and He will bring back the captives from all the places to which they have been driven. (Jeremias XXIX. 14.)

### *True Dignity*

It is difficult for man to make a right estimate of the value of human beings; we are inclined to over-estimate or underestimate; the Romans, sane and sensible in so many ways, enslaved their enemies and deified their emperors. Similarly, we readily expect too much or too little of human beings. Devotion to Christ's Heart is a great corrective here because it enables us to grasp something of the vast roles which God has chosen to assign to human beings in His plan of redemption. At the beginning of human history, God set up man, in the person of Adam, in original justice and holiness. In His inscrutable wisdom, He allowed man, in the person of Adam, to sin; in His infinite love, He decided to re-establish man in justice and holiness through human nature; redemption, He decreed, was to come through a plan in which men could do nothing by themselves, but in which also God would do nothing by Himself: salvation was to come through a man—the man, Christ Jesus. It was decreed that man, in the human nature of Christ, would restore what sinful men had lost.

But to this wonder, God added another. The human nature by which God chose to save men is primarily, but not exclusively, the human nature of Christ. All men are now one in Christ,

and to each, according to the measure of Christ's bestowing (Eph. IV.7.), is imparted some share in Christ's priesthood, in His saving power. This is particularly evident in the power of the Pope, of the bishop, of the priest. And by good example, by prayer, by atonement, by saying the Our Father, everyone has some opportunities of bringing grace to others. God so loved the world as to give to men an ineffable share in His own divine power and goodness. And this share, which is called grace, elevates man to a far higher dignity than could be attained by the accumulation in one individual of all the great genius, the wealth, the influence of all the greatest rulers of the world of all time. Here indeed is dignity and honour.

But it was also part of the divine plan that to be worthy of such divine honour and to exercise such divine power, we must strive to shed our natural ideas of honour and dignity. Humility and humiliation are the steps for us, as they were for Christ, by which we are honoured by God.

Love helps us to understand the paradox of honour through humiliation, of victory through defeat; it was the very means which men chose to humiliate and defeat Christ that Christ turned to His glory and His victory. "He became obedient unto death, even unto death on a cross; wherefore God has exalted Him and given Him a name which is above all names." (Phils. II.9.) And if we become one with Him in His death, we shall become one with Him also in the resurrection from the dead. (Roms. VI.5.) It is by the cross that other men in Christ find their glory, their triumph, their true dignity. For what appears to men as 'the folly of the cross is the wisdom of God and the strength of God'. (1 Cor. I. 18, 25.) When Christianity first confronted the ancient world, neither Jew nor gentile could naturally understand this paradox of honour through shame. 'How shall he be honoured whom the king hath a mind to honour?' (Esther VI. 6.) The divine King has not the same ideas of honour and dignity as ourselves; the ways in which He chooses to honour us may appear strange and even repugnant; and modern men, like ancient Israelite and Greek, have found the cross a stumbling block and a piece of folly.

Obviously neither God nor man could love the cross for its own sake; it is Christ who shows us in what way and for what motives the cross is to be loved: 'I came not to do My own will but the will of Him that sent Me; all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me. I go forward to the baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how earnestly do I desire that it be accomplished.' (John IV.34; Luke XXIV.44, XII.50.) He loved the cross because it was the cross which was to furnish Him with the supreme opportunity to show His eagerness to do the will of His Father, the supreme occasion to love men in all the circumstances which make love difficult. And of all that eagerness and love, the Heart is the great symbol. To embrace His Heart is to grasp the source of His dignity as a man, and thereby to possess ourselves of the means of achieving the greatest dignity possible to man.

This doctrine of the ennobling power of the cross is particularly relevant today when there is more talk than in any previous period of the "dignity of the human person." The gross and brutal assaults made by several governments on that dignity

have set men thinking with a new earnestness. But however earnest or even profound the thinking, man by himself could never discover the great means by which the 'King will honour him whom He hath a mind to honour.' (Esther VI.6.) The 'self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control which, Athena taught, lead life to sovereign power' are feeble and ineffectual compared with the cross which the worshippers of Athena rejected. The Greek striving towards human dignity through self-knowledge and "nothing too much", is in practice as ineffective as the modern pedagogical "self-assertion, self-expression, self-realization."

What man needs for his true dignity is the true doctrine of Christ. God so loved human beings, and so earnestly desired to honour them that He decided to become one Himself. By taking human nature to Himself, He planned to perfect the human nature of all men. And in His inscrutable wisdom, he decided to bring that perfection to all men through the cross. He wished to give us the greatest possible proof of the importance He attaches to us human beings, the greatest demonstration of His desire for our welfare; He gave us that proof when He sacrificed for us the greatest thing He could—His human life. Even the least lettered, the most despised, the most ill-treated of men can look at the Crucifix and say, "That is what I meant to God."

The whole doctrine of the Incarnation is then a continual challenge to man to revise his estimate, his natural estimate, of himself, to think higher and better of himself in the light of the cross than he ever would in the light of his human reasoning; he must realize that in a sense he means more to God than he does to himself. The devotion to the Sacred Heart gives this divine concept of human nobility a more tangible shape, and what is more important, gives us the proper safeguard. For this devotion is the union of the most energetic and magnanimous ambition with the most profound and abashed humility. From the Heart of Christ we can learn to strive after dignities and honours immensely beyond the dreams of any Cyrus, Alexander or Napoleon; for even the lowest degree of sanctifying grace overshadows all natural dignity of wealth, power and intelligence. From His Heart we learn too to estimate ourselves in this world as sinners who stand constantly in need of God's mercy, and even in the next world as creatures who are nothing in themselves but owe their all to God. By no other force can man raise himself so high as by union with the Heart of Christ; by no other force can he be so well protected from pride as by being rooted in the truth of the Eternal Word.

The institution of the church (with its corollary that some human beings possess divine authority), the activity of men in the ministry of the sacraments, the continual emphasis in the New Testament on brotherly love—all these things are the strong reminder to us of the vast importance which God has chosen to attach to human nature. Having redeemed man in His human nature, God continues to exercise His redemptive power by means of human nature: man is redeemed by man. It was the human race, summed up in Christ on Calvary, that redeemed the human race which fell in Adam. Each human being has his own work to do in redeeming himself and even in helping to redeem others. As St. Leo puts it (Sermon for the Feast of the Most Holy Redeemer, July 15th), 'in order to find His own goodness in us, God gives us the power to do what He does.' Each one can do a great deal—as long as he remembers that by himself he can do nothing. (John XV. 5.) While we are on earth we are, in union with Christ, the force that saves

the world; and God may continue our role as His co-workers even after our death. We are all permitted to have the same aspiration as St. Therese—to spend our heaven in doing good on earth.

Greater dignity can not be conceived than this, that we should be able to give to men that which is most divine—grace and eternal life. Human beings vary greatly, of course, in the efficacy with which they act as instruments of God. But the lowest degree of efficacy—the power of *any* human being to baptize—is already so elevated in power and honour as to surpass the natural powers of all the angels. And what human mind could hope to understand the mysterious manner in which God chooses the little ones to effect His great results; what mind can really grasp the profound truth of calling a French girl who died in her early twenties the Patroness of the Foreign Missions, of calling a woman of the Israelites the Mediatrix of All Graces, the Co-Redemptress of the World. The priests of Christ are indeed the normal, but not the only, channel of God's grace. Every true Christian can say, in his own limited measure, what Christ said in infinite measure: "I came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." (John X.10.) The bestowing of this eternal life is God's greatest work; to co-operate here with God is man's greatest dignity. Co-operation with God proceeds, as it started, from the cross, from the readiness to sacrifice, and it must go on to the readiness to sacrifice anything in order to do God's will perfectly.

Herein we have a guide and principle which can unify our whole lives. It happens too often, even in those who are consecrated in a special way to the pursuit of perfection, that a multitude of activities or interests befores one's unity of purpose. In any human endeavour, our efforts need a core, a centre, a single point to which all else is related and from which all else takes its meaning. Even the mediocre will or the mediocre talent can accomplish a great deal by pursuing one definite objective constantly. The efforts of human beings to please God need a tangible centre, and that centre we can find in the Heart.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart is a great help towards understanding our efficacy and our divine dignity, and at the same time towards remembering that we have no efficacy or dignity of ourselves, but only by grace, that is, by God's gratuitousness. It is by this devotion that we can come to appreciate our true dignity, the dignity of all men. To remind us in unmistakable terms that in dealing with men we are dealing always with Christ Himself, Christ left us His great standard: "As long as you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me." (Matt. XXV.40.) Our actions, even the simplest and most commonplace, take on a mysterious value because of the way in which they reach out and touch even Christ Himself. We can no more escape from Christ than we can escape from our human nature. This presence of Christ in the world of men confers on men an immense power; of ourselves, we can do nothing; but in Him who strengthens us we can do all things. (Phils. IV. 13.) "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. XXVIII. 18.); He has deigned to make us sharers in this immense power of His.

Our continual nearness to Christ, our close intimacy with Him, the power that we have through Him, all this is the measure of the value of our human nature and of our actions. And it

is particularly through the devotion to His Heart that we attain this nearness, intimacy and share in His power, because it is the devotion to the limitless and limitlessly tender love that Christ has for us, the love that has prompted Him to 'crown us with honour and glory, and to set us above the works of His hands.' (Ps. VIII. 6, 7.)

The devotion thus recalls to man his true greatness, worth and dignity.

But the devotion also presents the safeguard which prevents this appreciation of true dignity from turning into any form of pride; for the devotion reminds us how constantly, how grievously we have wounded His Heart in the past, and how readily, if we were left to ourselves, we would repeat all our old sins. We can learn from His Heart how incapable we are by ourselves of any good, how prone to evil. The devotion is the great school of humility. We cannot be devoted to His Heart without experiencing some of the sorrow we have compelled His Heart to experience through our sins, and true sorrow is always humble and one of the causes of humility.

What has been said so far points to a further conclusion—that the devotion is uniquely adaptable, uniquely suited to all tastes, ages, capacities. The doctrine on which it rests is so profound that the most intelligent and intellectual can find endless food for study and reflection, while the mind of humbler capacity can firmly grasp all it needs to know. As has been pointed out before, the devotion is suited to all spiritual ages from the sinner with confirmed habits of sin, to the person of seraphic contemplation fully ready to enter heaven.

We may go further and say that it is one form of devotion which is admirably suited to the sincere non-Catholic; for the one thing which any human heart can understand is generous, self-sacrificing love. Love is the essential work and the essential appeal of Christ, and every human being can understand that work (as far as he needs to) and can respond to that appeal. There are sinners outside, as well as inside the church, and Christ must have been thinking of both when He gave St. Margaret Mary to understand that sinners would find in His Heart an infinite ocean of mercy.

### ***The Guarantee of Our Perseverance***

Devotion to the Sacred Heart may be considered lastly as a guarantee of our perseverance. It is a devotion to the Heart which has suffered from all the ills of mankind, suffered especially from the evil of sin. By humility, by obedience, His Heart has triumphed over all these evils, especially over the evil of sin. It is a devotion to a Heart that is part of the glorified humanity of Christ; the Heart we adore is in actual possession of its glorious triumph over all evil—over sin, over sorrow and over death. It is consequently a devotion which honours the very obedience and humility which God rewarded by raising Christ from the dead and by appointing Him as heir of the ages and supreme ruler of the whole universe. He is subject only to



God and all other things are subject to Him (1 Cor. XV.24-28.) It is in this subjection of all things—celestial, human, diabolical—to Christ that our hope lies.

For among the things which God has subjected to the power of Christ we must reckon our own human nature with all its weakness, sinfulness, ignorance and general proneness to sin. Consequently devotion to His Heart is devotion to that which guarantees *our* triumph over sinfulness and weakness; not indeed in the sense that we can simply hand over to Christ the whole task of defeating all temptation and sinful inclination, but in the sense that devotion to His Heart guarantees all the graces we need to overcome the greatest difficulties and the most powerful and the most insidious temptations.

When we look at ourselves clearly and honestly, we see in ourselves a host of evil inclinations any one of which might seize hold on our heart and draw it away from the dominion of the Heart of Christ. Pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth breed in the heart of every man; and the more closely a man is united to the Heart of Christ, the more readily and fully he realizes that any one of these horrible perversions might bring him to sin, to death in sin and to eternal separation from Christ. This is what we see in a clear-eyed vision of ourselves.

But when we look clearly and honestly—and lovingly—at the Heart of Christ, we see in Him all our hope of fighting the good fight, of finishing the course, of overcoming the worst that our human nature can offer in opposition to grace. The truest, most profound humility and fear of ourselves is not only compatible with hope; it necessarily demands hope. To be fully humble, we must have the truest, profoundest, and most unchallengeable confidence in the goodness of His Heart, and in the power of His Heart to triumph in us over all evil. It was with this in mind that He taught us to call God our Father, and bade us say to Him with childlike simplicity: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Hence also in the Litany, we proclaim our trust in His Heart because it is 'full of goodness and love, rich to all who call upon Him, it is the abyss of all virtue, our life and resurrection.'

In this last pregnant phrase, in which we call *His* Heart *our* resurrection, we declare the profound union between Christ and the Christian—a union so profound, so intimate, so powerful that what He did thousands of years ago is a living force for us today. His resurrection has a special interest for those who are devoted to His Heart. For in the Passion men did the very worst to Him that they could in their wicked perversity: they stripped Him of His clothes, of His friends, of His reputation, of every vestige of bodily comfort, and finally of His life. Whatever man could do to frustrate, to humiliate Christ, and defeat the glorious designs of His Heart, men did. His resurrection stands for ever as the proof that "there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord." (Prov. XXI.30.) But still more marvellous, it is the proof that there is no evil or injury that can weary the love of the Heart of Christ. For the resurrection is not only the vindication of Christ and His gospel; it is, like the Passion itself, an act of supreme love; for by the resurrection He holds out His hands to the whole world and says: "Come to Me all you that labour and are heavy laden with sin, see My power to triumph over all sin; you have the power to join Me in My triumph, for have I not given you the power to

become, like Myself, the son of God?" Christ overcame the worst that human frailty and perversity could do; in Him we can achieve the same victory. We believe Him then to have said that to those who are devoted to His Heart He would give all the graces necessary for their salvation, and that He would be their assured refuge at the hour of death.

This guarantee of our perseverance that we have from the Heart of Christ does not in the least remove humility or the fear of failure, as no one knows with absolute certainty what his end will be. But the guarantee roots and grounds us in humility, and God, who resists the proud, gives His grace to the humble. Devotion to His Heart is devotion to a Heart that ardently longs for our salvation and works constantly for it.

# IV

## THE PROMISES OF THE SACRED HEART

### *The Nature of the Promises*

In many manuals of devotion there are listed the following "promises" made by Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary in favour of those devoted to His Sacred Heart:

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state in life.
2. I will establish peace in their homes.
3. I will comfort them in all their sorrows.
4. I will be their assured refuge in life, and more especially at the hour of death.
5. I will shower down abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in My Heart an infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall advance rapidly to great holiness.
9. I will bless every place in which a picture of My Sacred Heart is exposed and honoured.
10. I will give to priests the power of touching the most hardened hearts.
11. Those who promote this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be effaced from it.
12. I promise thee in the boundless mercy of My Heart that My all-powerful love will grant the grace of final repentance to all those who shall communicate on the first Friday, nine months consecutively. They shall not die in My displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments.

The church does not oblige us to believe, as part of our Catholic faith, that Our Lord made these promises in this form to the saint. The substance of most of the promises, however, is to be found in her writings, and the church has certified that these are not contrary to divine

revelation. Her works would hardly have been quoted by Pius XI in the great Encyclical on the Sacred Heart if the promises were in any way suspect; it would be imprudent and unreasonable to reject them simply on the grounds that they are not part of defined dogma. Besides, the promises have received the *imprimatur* of so many bishops in so many parts of the world that we may feel quite safe in accepting them as a reliable summary of the trust we may put in the Heart of Christ.

No promise of Our Lord in any way upsets the established order of grace. In this established order, there is one great law: *any* mortal sin destroys all strict claims on God's goodness, the soul in mortal sin has no *right* to any particular grace. No promise of Our Lord's then could ever encourage us to fall into mortal sin with the assurance that a "devotion" to the Sacred Heart would infallibly make things all right in the end. True devotion is not a means of securing eternal salvation in spite of mortal sin, but a means of avoiding mortal sin, of obtaining extra grace to remain in the state of grace, and thereby obtain ultimately the grace of final perseverance. Yet we may hold that if a person has practised this devotion faithfully and earnestly for some time, and then falls into grievous sin, this person will probably be disposed by Our Lord to receive the grace of conversion, and certainly will receive it if he continues to plead with Christ for that grace. It would be an abominable form of hypocrisy to practise the devotion with the intention of committing sin and of winning back grace some time before death. Yet by Our Lord and by the church the devotion is offered to all—not only to those who are on the road to perfection, but even to habitual sinners—provided that they sincerely desire to overcome sin and the habit of sin. The devotion has a special appeal to two classes: the habitual mortal sinners, and the deliberately venial sinners who really wish to be better.

In a sense, of course, it is a contradiction to say that anyone who deliberately continues in the habit of sin, really wishes to be better. But it is a logical, rather than a psychological, contradiction. For it is possible in practice to have a strong attachment to some deliberate sin, mortal or venial, and at the same time long to be free from the sin. St. Augustine summed up this tangled situation in the prayer he used before his conversion: "Lord, make me chaste, but not yet." One may be in the state of mortal sin, wish to be in the state of grace, but lack the courage, the generosity to make the necessary sacrifices and partings. One may be in the state of grace, and wish to be perfect, or at least, to strive earnestly after perfection, but yet lack the courage and generosity necessary to avoid all venial sin and all deliberate imperfection.

To both these classes of people (and their number is legion), the devotion has a special efficacy and appeal, for both of them appear to have been dear to Our Lord. It was especially to those oppressed by sin and by habits of sin that He addressed His great invitation: "Come to me all ye that are weary and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you." (Matt. XI. 28.) The Heart of Christ never knew sin or the inclination to sin; but He had, even as man, a profound understanding of the human heart, and He knew well that there are few burdens as heavy as the load of sin which a man detests but which he cannot make up his mind to rid himself of; there are few minds as weary as the mind that knows enough of God to be anxious to love God, yet finds itself bound and drawn by a host of inclinations that so often lead it into disobeying and insulting

God. There is the heart-ache of striving to overcome some sin, of achieving a measure of success, and then of finding oneself in the midst of a humiliating and discouraging fall, a fall which is all the more discouraging and disgusting because one would like to avoid it even at the moment of committing it. Such sins as lust and gluttony, lying, backbiting and petty tyranny, may arouse disgust and weariness at the very moment they are committed. And there would be no disgust, no weary mind, if the sinner had not *some* appreciation of better things, some desire to live by a noble ideal. The hardened sinner and the saint both have relatively peaceful minds; it is those in between who are most likely to feel sorrow, not as joy, consolation and peace, but as a disturbance and even an agony of mind. To the sinner who is really a sinner but who would also really like to be better, Christ reaches out His loving arms, and says: 'Come to Me, all you who are burdened with the heavy load of sin and sinful inclination; in My Heart you will find all the resoluteness and strength which you can never find in yourselves.' By the promises, Christ continues to say to men: "Him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out." (John VI.37.) No one, not even the sinner who has striven to overcome sin and has failed again and again, no one need hesitate to throw himself upon that Heart whose strength and joy are limitless because they are the strength and joy of God. "Of his fullness we have all received." (John I.16.) His Heart is full of courage and peace that the sinner, drawing towards His Heart, may cast away all weakness and all disturbance of mind. The promises of the Sacred Heart continue, and even in a sense develop, the teaching of Christ on His love and His readiness to help the sinner. He continues to prove Himself what we already know Him to be—the infinitely generous and compassionate lover.

From this point of view the promises proceed from Christ gratuitously; they are like the promise of a special holiday or gift made by a father to his son; he promises what the son has no right to, but once the promise is made it must be kept. All God's promises are gratuitous, first because He always promises more than we have any strict title to, and secondly because no divine promise can be effective without grace, and grace is always a gratuitous gift—either in baptism or in penance. Once the soul possesses sanctifying grace, then it can strictly merit supernaturally; but we must remember that the whole state of being in grace remains always what it was to start with—a gratuitous gift; we can merit indeed, but only by means of that which cannot be merited—grace. The promises of the Sacred Heart guarantee us not by supposing something in us, but by placing something in us; every particle of our excellence is, in the last analysis, the work of His gratuitous, generous love.

The vast generosity of His love and the transcendent goodness of His promises are summed up in a phrase of the Old Testament so profound as to be beyond the full understanding of any soul, however enlightened, in this world: "I am thy reward exceeding great." (Gen. XV.1.) It is really not life, or happiness, or security, or peace, that God promises us; it is His own transcendent Self. All other promises are contained in this tremendous, mysterious one which none understand but those who already possess Him. For, as St. Thomas puts it, the one thing which it is not given to us to know in this life is: What is God? Greater gift than God there could not be; greater and more mysterious promise than the promise of God, there could not be. And

all the promises of Christ are reduced to the promise of Himself. Greater generosity lies not within the power even of God. And we may find both a profound mystery and a proof of His love in the very tense He uses: "I am." For He gives Himself to us already in this world—by sanctifying grace (by which He makes us sharers in His own nature) and by Holy Communion (which is, quite literally, the gift of Himself).

Yet there is another phase of the promises that must be considered if we are to value them as highly as we should. Besides the human promise which offers a gratuitous gift, there is the promise that states the result of a line of action. A teacher may rightly promise a young singer that persevering effort will bring him to the top of his profession: he describes what will happen if certain things are done. The promises of Christ have this quality of "necessity"; they do not merely describe what God will confer on us from the outside; they reveal to us something of what He has done within us, and what we can hope to accomplish within and without ourselves by the help of His grace. And the success or good fortune which grace makes possible touches the very core or essence of Christianity; it is a very different thing from the long life, or peaceful old age, or abundance of offspring promised on certain occasions in the Old Testament. These temporal benefits, however desirable or enjoyable, are no more an essential part of the life of the Christian than they were of the life of Christ (who possessed none of them). What Christ does promise is an integral part of Christian perfection—growth in love. We may be failures in all else, but we can all be successes as lovers of God; the success which Christ promises is as enduring as His own. This may be borne out by a comparison of the promises with the parallel passages in the Bible, particularly in the distinctively Christian laws, in the Beatitudes, and in the Our Father.

## **THE BIBLICAL PROMISES**

### ***The Distinctive Laws of Christ***

Of the many commands and counsels of Christ, some are peculiarly distinctive in the sense that they sum up the essence and purpose of His teaching in a special way. Not only did He set high ideals before men—as Confucius or Socrates had done—He imposed seemingly impossible tasks and set Himself up as the perfect model. The exhortation to carry the cross daily, to lose our lives for His sake, to be perfect as our Heavenly Father, to be meek and humble as Christ, these summaries of Christ's teachings go far beyond anything the noblest or most enlightened pagans had thought of. And according to Christ Himself, all these counsels and commands are summed up in the one commandment of love, which is the "new" commandment and the one by whose observance His disciples are specially to be known. Love sums up everything else, because all His commands, like all His promises, proceed from His loving Heart and are intended to bring us back to His Heart. The fact that love includes everything tells us

something not only about *our* obligations, but also about His goodness. To make love the supreme law is to elevate the law in a supreme manner, and thereby turn it into something greater than mere law. For what a law as such requires is obedience, and obedience can be given only to a superior; love, however, can be perfect (and Christ wishes it to be perfect) only when it is between equals. Even decent human love, when it does not find equality, strives to create it. A man cannot really love a slave, because unless he elevates her from serfdom, she merely ministers to his lust. A woman cannot really love a man whom she despises as socially or intellectually inferior to herself. True love requires equality. Now God has deigned to demand not only that we love Him, but that we give Him a love which is worthy of His infinite goodness. We can give Him such a love because He has given us such a share in His own nature, adopting us as His sons in Christ. It is no mere human love that we can offer Him, because 'He has said, We are all gods and sons of the Most High.' (Ps. LXXXI.6.) Being one with Christ, we can love God with the Heart of Christ.

What is distinctive of the laws of Christ is not so much any particular action we are commanded to perform (as the Old Law was distinctive through its ceremonial), but rather the new relation which His commands set up between us and Him. "I will not now call you servants but friends." (John XV. 15.) What He desires is not so much zealous, efficient servants who will carry out assignments, but rather lovers with whom He can share the ineffable joys of His Heart. His commands express indeed the infinite majesty and the absolute authority of God; but they express still more the ardours and aspirations of His infinite love. All His commands issue from a Heart which commands primarily because it loves, and wishes to guide us towards the full enjoyment of its love. He commands not so much as the supreme power in the world, but rather as the supreme lover. The great commandment is a command not so much to do anything in particular, but rather to become the perfect lover of God: "Thou shalt love the Lord with thy whole heart, and whole soul, and with all thy strength." He commands here what no human being can immediately perform, since that perfection of love can come about only gradually and by long and patient effort. It is that effort that sets up man in the right relation to his great lover.

If we would be worthy of Him who has loved us so lavishly, we must try to see in His commands not so much a set of obligations which He chooses to lay upon us, but rather a set of guides by which alone we can respond to the intense aspirations of His Heart. He wishes to see us perfect in the one thing that matters—love; and it is because He is so earnest in His desire for our perfect love that He is so insistent on our obedience: "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you." (John XV. 14.)

We can see here the resemblance and the connection between His commands and His promises. If, besides commands, He gives us gratuitous promises, it is all for one purpose—to lead us, exhort us, entice us and almost lure us, into perfect love. His infinitely resourceful Heart searches out every device—threats, commands, promises—by which He may lead on imperfect human beings to perfect love. Thus we can define our attitude towards His promises: no one can hope to profit by them, unless he has *some* desire for perfect love; whoever hopes to profit greatly by them, must have a great desire for perfect love. And to draw all men, even sinners, He

makes it clear that what is important at the moment is desire rather than actual achievement. He will exclude not even sinners from His promises. For no matter what his sins, the sinner is still bound under pain of grievous sin never to despair of his salvation. The right of the sinner to hope for salvation must depend on a gratuitous promise of Christ since it cannot depend on anything in the sinner himself, who has stripped himself of all strict claims on God's justice. The promises find their foundation not in what we are or have, but rather in what Christ is—infinite goodness in the likeness of our flesh. The command of Christ to eat of His flesh and to drink of His blood, His command to love men with the perfect love He showed them, these commands likewise find their foundation not in our capacity but in His infinite goodness. He would not, could not, command us in the way He does if He had not first decided to enrich us with the extraordinary powers and opportunities of grace. And we cannot carry out His commands in the right way unless we have some determination, not merely to do as the Lord enjoins, but to profit by the opportunities of grace, and so accept the invitation of infinite love.

### **THE OUR FATHER: PRAYER AND PROMISE**

Christ's own prayer, the Our Father, is the charter of devotion to the Sacred Heart. It is the simple, yet inscrutably profound, statement of the aspirations of the Heart of Jesus, the statement of what He so earnestly desires and works for. It lays down, in terms understandable by all, the conditions upon which we can be united to His Heart: He gives the prayer to us that we may make these aspirations our own, that we may work to intensify them in ourselves, and make them realities in our daily Christian lives. Whenever we say this prayer, we are linked to Christ, our hand is in His, our mind is His, He and we pray together to Him who is Christ's Father and God as well as ours. What God hears is one voice, the voice of humanity united to His only begotten Son. By the fervent recital of the Our Father, we come more and more to have the "mind of Christ"—to have the same interests and aspirations as Christ. The more fully we see the meaning of the Our Father, the more are we one with Christ, thinking with His mind, feeling with His Heart.

The Our Father is a promise as well as a prayer, because it declares what we may and should ask from the Father in the name of His Son, and "whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, He will give you." (John XIV.13; Mark XI.24.) The promises of the Sacred Heart, as taken from the writings of St. Margaret Mary, are only a development of the same theme: they explain certain details of what Christ wishes, and of what we should wish in union with Him. In the Our Father, Christ expresses His own aspirations on behalf of the human race—that God may be honoured by all men, that sinners may be forgiven their sins, that all, by accepting His reign, may be freed from all evil. By putting these petitions in the plural, He expresses also His general aspiration that we may join ourselves to Him and work with Him for the triumph of good over evil—not that He has any need of us, but He loves us so much that He "desires to bring us into co-operation with Himself in the works that are dearest to His Heart. The Our Father is a prayer we can say at any time, under any circumstances; we can say it by actions as by words. Christ



intended it to be a prayer spread out over all our lives, a prayer by which we could fulfill His command: "Pray always." (Luke XXI. 36.) Whenever we say it, we unite ourselves to Christ, we perpetuate and extend in ourselves the authentic spirit and "mind" of Christ; we renew our faith in His generosity, in His endless patience, forgiveness and solicitude—we renew our trust in His promises, and help to establish in ourselves the very conditions which will ensure the fulfillment of His promises. The Our Father gives a firm foundation, both of doctrine and of confidence, to the promises. It stands as the clear, daily reminder that we must strive to do the will of Our Father as it is done in heaven—perfectly. To live by the spirit and the letter of the Our Father is the program we must follow if we wish the promises to be fulfilled in our regard.

### **THE BEATITUDES: BLESSING AND PROMISE**

The other great Biblical promises are the Beatitudes. (Matt. V.1-10.) They are made in particular to the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourners, those who hunger after justice, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peace-makers, the persecuted. To understand these promises aright, we must remember what Our Lord said shortly afterwards: "I came not to call the just but sinners." (Matt. IX.13.) Or as Paul put it, "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners." (1 Tim. I.15.) Christ continues to teach this same encouraging truth when He gives us to understand that 'sinners will find in His Heart an infinite ocean of mercy.' And the encouragement is here intended for all, for we can all add, as Paul did, "of sinners, I am the chief." The promises coming at the beginning of Our Lord's ministry are intended for sinners, and are a means of 'calling sinners.' They promise something not only to those who are perfect or are striving to be perfect, but also to those who are in mortal sin, in the habit of sin or imperfection. The Beatitudes, like the promises of His Heart, "call" sinners because they show sinners their faults, they hold out an ideal, they promise fulfillment of that ideal. And it is an essential part of the spirit of the New Testament that Christ calls sinners not merely to an ideal, to a lofty striving; He calls them to a person, a loving Heart, where they can find personal encouragement, personal warmth, personal guarantee of ultimate success.

The coincidences between the Beatitudes and the promises are so close as to make several of them for all practical purposes identical. The fourth Beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill", is a summary of all the promises, and is the firm, clear statement of the condition on which the promises will be fulfilled: sinners will find in His Heart an ocean of mercy—provided that they have some desire to attain the justice of that Heart, some hunger for the justification from sin He is so willing to give them. And the sinner who would profit by the Beatitudes (or the promises) must have some hunger for the justification of *all* sinners, since in the Our Father he must pray for all. Both the Beatitudes and the promises declare the over-flowing generosity, the tender solicitude of God for all, especially for sinners, a generosity and a solicitude with which God has filled the Heart of Christ that from His fullness we might all receive.

### *The Promises and the Sacraments*

"The Church can heal the wounds (of the human mind) by having access to the innermost sanctuary of the human being." (Pius XII, Address to the Cardinals, Feb. 20th, 1946.)

The sacraments of Christ, like the Our Father, are prayers and promises together; they bestow something immediately, and they promise other things for the future. They throw light on the promises particularly in this that they remind us forcefully that their ultimate end is not the sinner but God. If the boys in the fiery furnace could exclaim (Dan. III.57.): "Sun, and moon, and stars, and clouds, and everything that lives, bless the Lord", how much more should we call on the sacraments to bless and give glory to God; for they are the symbols of Christ's dominion over water, and oil, and bread, and over the living soul of man. The liturgy (of which the sacraments are so essential a part) has as its first purpose to offer to God an adoration really worthy of Him. "The sacred Liturgy is the public worship which our Redeemer, the Head of the Church, renders to the Heavenly Father, and which Christ's faithful render to its Founder, and through Him, to the Eternal Father." (*Mediator Dei*, § 29.)

What is true of the liturgy is true of the promises. Like the sacraments, they are "propter homines", instituted for the sake of men, but intended always as means of honouring, serving, loving God. If we will keep this "God-ward" aspect of the promises in mind, we can the more easily avoid the natural inclination to look on them in a selfish light, as something that smooths the rough road or widens the narrow path that leads to heaven. In a sense they do facilitate the way to perfection (as do the sacraments). But the "God-ward" aspect should show us that the facility they bestow is not by eliminating difficulties or temptations, but by strengthening us to face and overcome them. They guarantee us, not smaller and weaker enemies, but harder struggles and more glorious victories. Christ's 'yoke is sweet and His burden light,' but only because Christ sweetens it and carries it with us. One of the great lessons which the Little Flower teaches us is that child-like confidence in God supposes, not an easy-going, merely passive reliance on God's goodness, but a courageous determination to shoulder whatever load God may wish to lay on us. For the more perfect our hope, the more perfect our charity must be, and the more perfect the bond between our hope and our charity; and the greater our charity, the greater our readiness to face anything—any difficulty, sacrifice or suffering—for God.

The sacramental system as a whole reminds us of these great principles of Divine Providence. The sacraments are the props which an infinitely thoughtful God puts under our enfeebled, benighted humanity; they are not the pillows or the silence with which we may soothe and comfort an invalid, they are rather an invitation to start our march on a long, difficult road, to develop our endurance and courage and spiritual vigour.

We would then be acting in a manner quite unworthy of Christ if we used His promises to lull ourselves into an unreal spiritual security, or if we allowed them to make us lower our aims, to be content with present mediocrity. For He gives them to us, as He gives the sacraments, to stir us to new activity by encouraging in us a new generosity. They do not in any way abrogate or minimize the sacraments, because the sacraments are still the great means by which He gives grace to men, and has 'access to the innermost sanctuary of the human being.' Far from displacing the sacraments, the promises are intended to dispose us to receive fuller benefits from them.

The sacraments closely resemble the Heart for both are material things which are specially endowed with divine power and dedicated to the salvation of men. The purpose of the sacraments is to unite us to Christ, to enable us to partake of the effects of His love; that is, the purpose of the sacraments and of the devotion is exactly the same. In all the sacraments Christ, while using the ministry of men, is really present and operative, Christ Himself is personally working for our salvation. The fact that He delegates powers to His priests does not in any sense take away from His own efficacy; what the priest does has such transcendent results because the Heart of Christ is working with the priest. But it is also true that the amount of grace received is ordinarily proportionate to our dispositions at the time of receiving them. Now devotedness to the Sacred Heart has a special power of developing the ideal dispositions, and so of increasing the grace received. Any act of true devotedness brings us so much nearer to His Heart, enables us to see more clearly what goes on in His Heart; there is gradually set up that profound "sympathy" or fellow-feeling between Christ and ourselves which gives us the "mind of Christ." Attaining this "mind" is made easier and quicker for us since we can understand the human Heart of Christ in a way and degree in which we cannot understand God directly. It was not in vain that "God, having spoken to us in various manners and at various times by the prophets, has spoken in these days to us by His Son." (Heb. I.2.) God Himself could find no better way of speaking to us than by His own divine Word who "is the flashing forth of his glory, and the very expression of his being." (Heb. I.3.) This Word of God, equal to God, expresses the grandeur and the beauty and the goodness of the divine nature to us human beings because He has taken on our human nature. The divine nature which is so mysterious in itself, and so remote from the understanding of man, is now brought into the world by the Incarnation that He might teach us all things in a way divinely accommodated to our human understanding; and He teaches us His own goodness that we may love it. The divine plan is that our love for Christ and our knowledge of Him should continually increase, knowledge giving us ever more and more motives to love Him, and love deepening our knowledge. The closer we are to Christ, the better are our dispositions for receiving the sacraments; and the way to get closer to Christ is to know and to love His Heart. Love for Him will bring a kind of knowledge for which there is no substitute; there is an intimate knowledge possible to lovers to which the intellect by itself cannot aspire.

In one way then the promises of the Sacred Heart renew His bountifulness in granting us the sacraments. He promises all the graces necessary for our salvation because the devotion encourages us and motivates us to frequent confession and Communion; and at the beginning He

had promised us: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood hath everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day." (John VI. 54.) The promise that sinners shall find in His Heart an ocean of mercy is really only another way of describing the ease and confidence with which we can approach the sacrament of penance; the promise becomes unavailing to the person who refuses to confess. The devotion helps us to value two other sacraments, baptism and confirmation; to see the connection we must recur to one or two points about the sacraments.

The infusion of grace by the sacraments resembles somewhat the infusion of life at the moment of creation: it is instantaneous yet enduring. The power of God which calls us into being from nothing keeps us also in being for the term which His providence has set. In much the same way, baptism and confirmation are sacraments by which God continues to operate within us, within the very substance of the soul, long after the moment of actually receiving them. By baptism God maintains us in being as sons of God, for the sacrament gives us, and maintains in us, the right to receive certain supernatural helps from God—in general, the helps we need to live as befits the sons of God. By confirmation, God continues to strengthen us to endure and to overcome all the obstacles we meet in living lives worthy of Him. There is, however, a still closer connection between these sacraments and Christ. Those who have been baptized have been baptized into His death. (Rom. VI.3.) We enter into His death by entering into possession of those good things which He purchased for us by His death; we begin in baptism that divine life in which the merely human life suffers the mystical death of ceasing to be the main force at work within man; grace having once taken possession of us strives to subdue us wholly to God; it is grace, the share in the divine life of God, and not our merely human life, which is henceforth to be the primary source of our thoughts, words and actions. Baptism, by its very nature, then looks to the future, establishes our claims on God for the future, and is a source of energy on which we can continue to draw all our lives,—all because it gives us a share in the death of Christ.

Confirmation is likewise a gift by which we are endowed with the merits of Christ's Passion; it is the sacrament which is particularly intended to give us the strength to carry our cross alongside Christ. We would not love God, if He had not first loved us, and 'sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' (1 John IV.10.) We would not be able to carry the cross if the Son had not first carried it for us by 'bearing our infirmities and carrying our sorrows.' (Is. LIII.5.) Confirmation is then a sacrament by which the merciful effects of the Passion are prolonged throughout the life of each one of us on earth. Whatever difficulties or temptations we may encounter were foreseen in all their details by Christ at the moment at which by the hands of His bishop He confirmed us. It is His plan then that we should at all times be drawing on the graces made possible to us by baptism and confirmation. In so far as our lives are lives of faith, hope and charity through baptism, and lives of fortitude through confirmation, Christ is enabled to fulfill His great promise: "This is the will of the Father, that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." (John VI. 39.)

The great general condition for being pleasing to God and for attaining eternal life is that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son." (Rom. VIII. 29.) Now the actual means by which God makes us conformed to His Son is the sacraments; they introduce, maintain and

intensify divine life in us. The sacraments have a special connection with the Passion, especially with the Heart which suffered so much during the Passion. "The soldier opened, not 'struck' or 'wounded', but opened the side of Christ," says St. Augustine, "that thereby the entry to life might be opened to us; for from His side flowed the Sacraments of the Church without which there is no entry to the life which is the true life." (Office of the Sacred Heart.) St. Augustine here sums up the traditional view that the great saving forces of the sacraments flow from the Heart which was opened for us. St. Gregory also draws the parallel between the formation of Eve from the side of the first Adam and the formation of the church from the side of the second, Christ.

It is but fitting that the sacraments should have this connection with the physical Heart of Christ, for the Heart symbolizes love, and the sacraments, especially the Mass, are the abiding, the perfect, and the tangible proofs of God's love for men. The sacraments are all, each in its own way, the renewal of the Passion of Christ, and the Passion is the great act of love. As often as we receive any of the sacraments, we are joining in some measure in Christ's great act of love, we are united to His Heart. A sacrament is then a divine institution by which God unites us to the sacred humanity of Christ, endowing us with His merits and graces, and giving us a participation in His Passion.

In the Passion Christ offered not only His whole self but the whole of humanity to His Father, desiring, as far as men's willingness would permit, to make of all men one perfect clean oblation without spot or blemish, an immaculate victim with which the Father would be well pleased. (Mal. I.11; Eph. V.27.) The perfection of the whole victim is of course brought about only in time; for we must work "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the full measure of the stature of Christ." (Eph. IV.13.) The work of bringing about this perfect human race, this "perfect man in Christ", is assigned to the sacraments. Whatever the Sacred Heart promises us in the way of conversion from sin, growth in grace, final perseverance, and eternal glory, is promised us through the sacraments.

The operation of grace, the effects of the sacraments, are above all else the effects of divine love. It is from this they derive their marvellous efficacy; it is on account of this that Christ makes us such magnificent promises. For divine love enters into the inner sanctuary of man, into his heart, his will, and by taking possession of his will, takes possession of the whole man. The promises must be understood in the light of Christ's loving power to act on our hearts from within our hearts themselves. "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord; whithersoever he will, he shall turn it." (Prov. XXI.1.) True devotion to *His* Heart consists in trying to set up in *our* hearts those conditions in which He may work freely within us in every prompting that leads us on to perfect love. His promises are not so much a contract He makes with us; they are rather the way in which He describes the vigorous efficacy of His love within us.

There are many passages in the liturgy which present us with this way of considering God's benignant providence towards the weakness of our human nature; the postcommunion of the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost may be cited as summing up the others: "May the operation of Thy divine gift (Holy Communion) take such possession, O Lord, of our minds and bodies, that the graces flowing from it, and not our own impulses, may inspire all our actions."

We might say that the Sacred Heart fulfils His promises by giving us the sacraments and easy access to the sacraments. Both sacraments and promises are abiding proofs of His love for us; they are also the ways by which He intensifies our love for Him, the points of contact at which He establishes and increases our union with Him. This may help us still further to understand some of the conditions we must fulfill that His promises may be fulfilled in us.

We should note that when a person sins mortally or venially, or when a person is damned, it is never God who is in any way lacking or to blame; it is always the sinner. In much the same way, the *amount* of grace we receive is limited, not so much by any niggardliness on God's part but by our lack of co-operation or of generosity. The ruin of Israel is from itself; its salvation is from the Lord. (Osee XIII.9.) Consequently the promises of Our Lord do not remove the possibility of sin, mortal or venial; or the possibility of our damnation. What this implies in practice is that our reliance must be entirely on God, not on ourselves; and when our reliance is *entirely* on God, then we are assured of His grace. For "hope confoundeth not, because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us and by whom we have been sealed unto the day of redemption." (Roms. V.5; Eph. IV.30.) "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded." (Ps. XXX.1.)

We must remember that we can have this absolute trust in God partly on account of the very special nature of grace which is not merely the greatest of God's gifts, but a unique gift which has no true parallel in the natural world. For grace is a share in the very divine life of God Himself, that is, a share in that which is most peculiarly divine, God-like, that which belongs naturally only to God. In its origin, grace proceeds from the inmost Heart of God which no intelligence save God's own can naturally know; in its effect, it reaches down into the heart of sinful humanity, conferring on us a power and elevating us to a dignity to which not the highest angel could aspire by his mere angelic rights. And this power and honour, though they come to us from God, are not merely conferred on us from the outside (as kingly or presidential rank leaves the inner substance of the man unchanged); grace is 'keener than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the soul and spirit.' (Hebr. IV.12.) We have an indication of this *inner* power of grace in the seal which baptism, confirmation and Holy Orders leave on the soul, a seal which neither subsequent sin nor increase of merit can efface in time or eternity. By grace, God enters into the very core of our being, leaving us truly human, but transforming our life into one that is truly divine.

## THE EUCHARIST: GIFT AND PROMISE

It is only fitting that the great symbol of this transforming power of grace should be cast by Christ in the form of food. Food is the one natural parallel, it is the one external thing which we take into ourselves and transform into our very substance, our living flesh and blood. Other material things may become ours, food alone becomes us. In the natural mystery of nourishment, we find an image of the supernatural mystery by which man is made into something higher than man. The Eucharist is the crown of the whole sacramental system, of the vast dynamism by which God makes human beings over into something divine, turning sons of men into the sons of God. And while it is true that we possess divine life, it is still truer that grace is that by which God possesses us and works more powerfully within us. For the Eucharist is not only food, it is the means by which Christ continues to dwell in a bodily manner amongst men, and, in Holy Communion, comes to dwell within men; and He dwells amongst us and within us principally that He may rule over us, and claim us wholly for God.

It is not by any accident that this great sacrament is the one immediately involved in what has come to be known as the "Great Promise"; nor is it by chance that the church has united the honour paid to the Heart very closely to the worship of the Blessed Eucharist. The promises, by being connected with the Eucharist, are connected with the whole sacramental system, especially with baptism (which is the condition for receiving Holy Communion), penance (which is the means of purifying the soul and is the authentic liturgical preparation for Communion), and Holy Orders (the sacrament which continues Christ's priesthood and confers the power of consecrating). The "Great Promise" is really only a form of the promise given by Christ in his mortal life: "Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day." (John VI. 54-55.) Here we have command and promise together, and the two are stated in convertible terms—the promise and the command amount to the same truth: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world." (John VI.51-52.) Christ presents Himself as the supreme vivifying *force* (He is the "bread"); as supremely *generous* ("any" man may eat of this bread); and as the supreme *lover*. 'He is to give His flesh for the life of the world.' The element of command comes then not so much from the exercise of His authority; rather His authority is exercised by His love: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day." It is because He wishes to 'lose none of them that have been given to him' (John XVII. 12.); it is because He wishes to bestow eternal life on all; it is because He wishes to be a benefactor and lover on the most magnificent scale; it is because of these things that He commands. Christ's sovereign authority is commanded by His love. We might almost say that His head is ruled by His Heart.

If we would benefit by His promises, we must then do two things: receive Holy Communion fervently and practise the law of love. And in a sense, even these two are one, for the increase of charity and the practice of charity are the prolongation of Holy Communion in us. The sacramental species disappears after a time; but the sacrament is intended to strengthen our

charity, and to lead us to a fuller exercise of it, and this increase and added stimulus is *not* transitory—it will last till we either destroy it by mortal sin or weaken it by venial sin. By Holy Communion Christ comes to dwell in us in a special way; He continues to dwell until we chase Him from us; as long as He stays with us, He remains the pledge of our eternal redemption and salvation. The "great" promise is really an expansion of the biblical promises connected with the Eucharist. 'He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him. He that abideth in Me bringeth forth much fruit; the fruit of the Spirit is love. If anyone love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him. If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it will be done to you.' (John VI. 57, XIV. 23, XV. 5-7; Gals. V. 22.) These later words are really only an expansion of the earlier words in which the Holy Spirit describes the mission of the Son: "As many as received Him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, and these are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, full of grace and truth, and of his fullness we have all received." It was the intention of Providence then to connect the promises made to man with the man Christ, with the mystery of the Incarnation, with the communication of this mystery to men through the Blessed Eucharist.

The practical conclusion that follows from all this is that we should do all in our power to make ourselves worthy of the promises of Christ, and the great means to do this is the Eucharist. Around this sacrament which is Christ Himself, our whole lives should revolve. We can draw constantly on the graces received through baptism and confirmation in order to make ourselves ever more and more ready to join Christ in Communion. We can use the sacrament of penance to cleanse our souls and bodies that we may be more worthy dwelling places for the glory of God. We can make every act an act of thanksgiving and an act of preparation for the coming of Christ. "For other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid, Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. III.11.) The Eucharist is the foundation of all union with Christ, the source of all growth in that union.

This intimacy with Christ is not a thing reserved for a few chosen souls; it is open to all through the ordinary channels of the sacraments, and there must be very few people who have not at some time felt a special invitation from Christ to enjoy this intimacy. If the obstacles to this intimacy are, in millions of cases, burnt away only in the fires of purgatory and not in the fires of divine love in this world, it is again only through lack of generosity on our part—that is, through our failure to draw from the sacraments all that Christ intends us to have through them.

For example, anyone who would begin to wish to be intimate with Christ will try to fill his mind with the thought that Christ died for him. The power of the Passion to inspire us with sorrow and hatred for sin is a power which cannot be exhausted. Intimacy with Christ, even on a tiny scale, will in this way constantly prepare us for confession, and for receiving further pardon and remission through Holy Communion. To love Christ at all is to realize that every sin is a direct offence against the man Christ. We can understand more readily, and more vividly, what it is to scourge, to spit on a man, to hang him in torture on a cross, than what it is to offer an insult to Infinite Majesty. We may use the principle which St. John uses in a different connection:



could we claim that we love God whom we do not see, if we do not love men whom we do see; how could we be sorry for offending majesty which is infinitely remote because it is infinitely great, if we are not sorry for offending a dear friend who is right beside us? Devotion to the Sacred Heart is, among other things, a way of coming to a fuller realization that Christ is man, that He has a human Heart, that in so many ways He is so like us. Looked at in this way, the devotion is not at all a substitute for the sacraments, but it is a powerful means of developing the dispositions through which the salutary effects of the sacraments are enriched. The more intimate our knowledge of Christ, the greater the benefits we draw from penance, and the more perfect thereby our preparation for Communion.

From the point of view of Christ, the purpose of the promises and of the Eucharist is the same: that He may abide in us, and we in Him, that we may come to possess Him and He may come to possess us ever more and more fully. The promises are intended to draw us to that Heart which is the "house of God," that by dwelling in it constantly we may come to have no thought, aspiration, word or deed but is in perfect conformity with the thoughts and aspirations of His Heart. Every Communion should increase our devotion to His Heart by establishing an ever greater, more intimate, more intense, more enduring union between Christ's Heart and ours.

For He gives us His Heart in Holy Communion in order to work on our hearts, so that not one particle of our body, not one talent or inclination of our mind may be left that is not completely submitted to the will of our Father, and so, perfectly in love with God. When the work of grace is complete, we are ready for the final communion with God, in which all His promises find their perfect fulfillment—in the great, last and lasting gift of Himself perfectly known, intensely loved and fully enjoyed. In the meantime, He prepares us for that intimate union—in many ways, but particularly by union with Himself in the great sacrament of love. The "Great Promise" is then no invitation to rely mechanically on one kind of devout act—receiving Holy Communion on stated days—to excuse us from other effort. It is rather a particularly pressing invitation to partake of that sacrament which most directly and most completely performs the work of salvation within us. It is consequently an urgent request from Christ to prepare ourselves fittingly for that sacrament.

Every effort we make to prepare ourselves for Holy Communion makes us worthier of the all-inclusive promise Christ made when He instituted Holy Communion: 'Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you.' (John XIV.13.) The promise here is universal, but there is a very important condition attached to it: "in My name." We may see some of the meaning of this great phrase if we remember what makes the prayers and the promises of Christ infallible. The prayers of Christ the man are infallibly answered by God, because the human will of Christ, His every word and aspiration, is in perfect conformity with the divine will in all matters. Even in the Garden, He could ask only what God had decreed to give Him—not immediate succour, but a final triumph. The man Christ can promise us only what God has decreed to give us. His prayers are always answered because He asks only what pleases God; His promises are always fulfilled because He promises what God has already decreed to do.

## *Hope*

To pray 'in the name of Christ' is then not so much a matter of using any particular formula (though the Our Father is the basic guide), but rather of entering more and more fully into the dispositions of the mind of Christ. We pray in the name of Christ when we are in union with Him—by grace, especially by sanctifying grace, by charity, by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, by acts which express and intensify the union. In so far as we are incorporated into Christ, we are taken up into His perfect conformity with the will of God. In so far as we possess grace, the Holy Ghost possesses us, dwells in us, and moves us to ask only what is in perfect conformity with what God wishes. In so far as we are in union with Christ, we can ask only what God has already decreed to give us: so our prayers must be answered, we become worthy of the promises of Christ, and His promises are fulfilled in us.

This is one great reason why, in all our undertakings, we must be absolutely prepared to leave the decision of the outcome with God; and this is particularly true of the great undertaking which God makes His own in a special way—our salvation. There must be very few human beings who have not, at one time or another, had the moment of panic of realizing that they may be damned. In the midst of the most serene confidence in God, we must remember that we may be damned; in the midst of the most shaking temptations and doubts, we must remember that our salvation is in much better hands than our own: 'Thy salvation is from me, O Israel.' (Osee XIII. 9.) "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He will uphold thee." (Ps. LIV. 23.) "Come to me, all ye who labour and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. XI. 28.) We must be prepared to trust God with all things, even with our own salvation; and the more completely we trust Him, the more secure we are. For hope and love must grow together; and every true act of trust is an act of true love bringing us into closer union with Him who wishes to work undisturbed at the centre of our soul that He may enrich us with great graces and lose not one of the souls whom the Father has given into His keeping. (John XVII. 12.)

For God is in Himself immovable, unchangeable, and it is to His absolute steadfastness, not to our own strength, that we must look for our hope of perseverance and salvation. Among created things, however, the Heart of Christ is our hope in a special way, for that Heart is, and always has been, united to God's steadfastness in a special way. He knows the waywardness, the weakness of *our* hearts, their readiness to forget the wondrous beauty of God, their constant inclination to fasten their affections on the things that are not God; He knows how hard it is for us to keep God in mind, how easy to be swamped in the appeals of other things. For He made all these things, it was He who put into them all the beauty and appeal which they have; this world with all its woe and suffering is still a garden of delights in which He asks us to love Him whom we do not see infinitely above all the good things we do see. He knows far better than we do, how hard is our task. So He gives us His own Heart that in it we may find the steadfastness, the dependability we shall never find in our own. So to all those who appeal to His Heart He promises and He will give "all the graces necessary for their salvation."

### *Fulfilment Supposes Our Co-Operation*

It is by giving us His Heart that He hopes to win our hearts for Himself, not that He would take anything away from us, rather He would strengthen us by sheltering us within His own Heart. The closer our union with His Heart, the freer is He to act within us, the more powerfully does His grace, His love, His dominion or kingship take possession of us. Any attempt on our part to love Him gives Him that much more scope to act on us. He desires our hearts—our sinful, selfish, weak hearts—in order that, by our freely giving Him these hearts, He may purify them, sanctify them, consecrate them, and make them part of the perfect universe which He is to offer to His heavenly Father. While there is an endless number of degrees of perfection with which we may give Him our hearts, *any* degree helps (in so far as human beings can help) to produce this condition in which Christ makes of us a perfect offering to the Father, completing the sacrifice He offered on Calvary. For He loves us so much that He left us the immensely noble work of 'filling up in our flesh what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ on behalf of His body which is the church.' (Cols. I. 24.)

Our power to make up what is wanting in the sufferings of Christ is of course a gift from Christ—we can do simply nothing of ourselves. It is largely by giving us this power that Christ fulfils His characteristic work. In Christ, humanity and divinity are inseparable; the special prerogative of Christ's humanity is to unite to itself the humanity of all the elect, that is, to make their humanity also inseparable from God. The absolutely unbreakable bond between God and man in Christ is not realized in other men till the moment of death in grace, but everything else must lead up to that moment, at which hope loses its existence because hope is fulfilled. During our lives we are united to God by the bond of grace and love, and that bond cannot be broken by God, only by ourselves. God presents us with His Heart that, by understanding His motives, we may never have motives for breaking away from Him. The more we turn to His Heart, the more will He teach us the knowledge and give us the strength which will not indeed prevent us from breaking away from Him, but will make us wish never to do so. "Make me cling to Thy commandments and never allow me to be separated from Thee." (Second prayer before Communion in the Missal.)

There is one salutary thought that humility and decent gratitude should recall to us here—that devotion to the Heart is not primarily something which *we* practise; it is one of the great gratuitous gifts of God. No man can acquire this devotion by himself any more than he can become a follower of Christ by himself: 'you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you; for you would not love me if I had not loved you first.' (John XV.16; I John IV.10.) The first act of true devotion is then to ask for the devotion; the devotion and the measure of it are entirely in the keeping of Christ. No doubt we can always do more to merit an increase of devotedness, but 'it is God who giveth the increase.' (1 Cor. III. 6.) And we should appeal not only to Christ Himself, but also to the woman who knew His Heart as no one else ever did or could. Mary observed Him in all His moods; by grace and by natural affection she was in a unique position to understand every throb, impulse and aspiration of His Heart, to feel and to think whatever He felt and thought. From His Heart Mary drew her own generosity, and she will give us abundantly of her

knowledge and love if we only try to ask in the right way: whatever we ask the Mother in Christ's name, she will give us.

### *Prayer in the Name of Christ*

We pray in the name of Christ when we pray to fulfill the great plan which Christ came to realize in this world. The promises are a description (in some detail) of the main things which we may ask in the name of Christ. The promises are fulfilled out of the gratuity and generosity of God, and yet not out of mere supererogatory generosity on the part of Christ, but also by virtue of the laws which God has chosen to set up in Christ, and through Christ, to extend to all mankind. In this way, the Promises of the Sacred Heart coincide with the general theological teaching that to every human being (no matter what the state of his soul), God continues until death to give all the graces necessary for salvation. This is another way of saying that the laws of the supernatural order proceed not from the nature or needs of man, but from the nature of the Trinity, from the infinite goodness of God as He is in Himself.

We find here a paradox similar to an earlier one. We noted before that our sublimest, serenest confidence in Christ does not for a moment remove the realization of our possible damnation; and the humility which makes us see that we could damn ourselves does not in any way conflict with the most unquestioning trust in Christ. We must now try to see that, while Christ's promises are addressed to sinners, they are intended to transform us from sinners into perfect lovers. We pray very often that "we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ". If that prayer is to be more than windy rhetoric, we must see the end or purpose of those promises,—not to leave us in our mediocrity, in contentment with half-hearted efforts, in a vague expectation that a long stay in purgatory will make up for lack of effort in this life; the end of the promises is to lift us up (at God's own speed, of course) from our misery and mediocrity to the height of perfect love sometime in *this* world. "Fervent souls will be raised to great sanctity"; the promise is really the same as the command: 'He that is holy let him be sanctified still, for he must love the Lord his God with his *whole* heart.' (Apoc. XXII. 11; Deut. VI.4.)

The promises are intended by Christ to lead us on, even to coax us on, from half-hearted to whole-hearted love, from the love that calculates to the love that surrenders itself wholly and unquestioningly. Like the Beatitudes, they have this paradoxical quality about them that they promise a reward in order to develop in us a love that no longer thinks of reward; they promise a reward which is in a sense not a reward at all. For both Beatitudes and promises hold out to us not so much the hope that we shall possess something, but rather that we shall be possessed wholly and for ever. To "possess the land", to "have one's fill of justice", to "obtain mercy", and to "see God", are all ultimately the same, and are expressed in the great promise to Abraham: "I am thy reward exceeding great." (Gen. XV.1.) To enter into the way of divine love is to begin the journey towards the perfect state in which we no longer love God for what He does or can do for us, but for what He is in Himself—infinite good and therefore infinitely lovable. The most

selfless of the saints have known, like Paul, that there is 'laid up for them a crown of justice which the Lord awards to all who love Him' (2 Tim. IV. 8); but they also knew, in proportion to their love, that God is lovable for Himself, and they strove, not primarily to achieve something, even success in the spiritual life; they strove to please that Heart which pre-eminently deserved all the joy they could give it. The ideal of a disinterested love, which thinks primarily of God, is a difficult one, far from achievement at the moment; but unless we try to keep it in mind, and strive for it, we shall not enjoy the full benefit of the promises; we must not try to separate the promises from the purpose for which Christ made them. Christ was considerate enough to envisage every type of man in His promises—the sinner, the lukewarm, the saint; but obviously He did not intend the promises to be an encouragement to the sinner to remain in his sin, nor to the lukewarm to remain in his tepidity. The promises are enticements to start going, and to keep going, along the road that leads to perfect love.

### *Christ's Promises and Our Death*

Death brings about the endless prolongation of the last instant of life. What strikes our human minds is the progressive coldness, stiffness and decay of the *body*; what is important about death is the state of the *soul*; whatever this is at the moment of death, it is going to be for all eternity. It is this enduring state that Christ has chiefly in mind, and in this sense all His promises refer really to the ultimate and enduring state after death. To those who love God, death is the great guarantee, securing them in their love for ever, sealing them with the sign of redemption, with the blood of the Heart of Christ. To these, death is the final act by which the Heart penetrates them so completely as to take possession of them for ever. We must never allow ourselves to grow over-confident; but we must endeavour to remember that Christ plans our death to come at that moment at which we can, by the operation of His love, be best prepared to receive Him at His final call which will last for ever. "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Apoc. XIX. 9.); death is the last great invitation. "At the hour of death bid me come to thee, that with thy saints I may sing thy praises for ever."

As a summary of the attitude we ought to take towards the promises of Christ and our own death, we can hardly find anything better than the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the teaching of which may (from our present point of view) be paraphrased as follows:

Through God's loving kindness, there is no condemnation for those who live in Christ, that is, for those who live according to His standards and not according to the mere promptings of human nature. For Christ by His vivifying grace has freed us from the death of sin, and holds out to us the hope of a final victory over sin and over death. What the old law could not do—namely, justify us from our sins—God has accomplished by sending His Son into the world; what our human nature could not do—protect us fully against our evil inclinations—the Son makes possible for us by living in our flesh. For to us human nature in its fallen state is the source of sin; but in Christ, human nature united to the Son of God becomes the source of all

triumph over sin. To end the power of sin over man, God condemned sin and redeemed man from sin through the flesh of Christ on the cross. This redemption, this liberation from sin, is not effective save for those who desire to live according to the spirit of God, and not according to the promptings of human nature. If Christ be in you, then will you put to death the inclinations of the flesh; the Spirit will live in you to cleanse you from sin and sinful inclination. For in so far as you are united to Christ, you put to death all the unclean desires of your human nature. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will give life even to your mortal bodies, and, much more, to your immortal souls. If God is for us, what matter who is against us? For He has not spared His own Son, but has delivered Him up for us all; how then could He refuse us anything else? It is Christ who died for us; it is Christ who, for our sake, was raised from the dead; it is Christ who pleads for us. Who then can separate us from the love of Christ?

# V

## THE REIGN OF THE SACRED HEART

Even the loftiest and most salutary devotion can sink into trivialities and sentimentalism. If our devotion to the Sacred Heart is to have the necessary robust manliness, and enter as it should into our daily lives, we must base it on solid truth. The great practical truth we need to remember is that we can properly acknowledge Christ's absolute dominion over us only by love. He won His power by love—by His unreserved love for God and man; He seeks to use and extend His power by love—by our unreserved love for the Man-God. The loving recognition of His kingship is then an integral part of devotion to His Heart. Limitless power and limitless love—the two great marks of His kingship—may be illustrated from the scriptural and liturgical concept of the reign of the Messiah.

### *Christ's Kingdom in Scripture and Liturgy*

In the Old Testament, the kingdom of the Messiah is represented as universal in time and place. "I am appointed king by him over Sion, his holy mountain. The Lord hath said to me: Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. II. 8.) "He shall humble the oppressor; in his day shall justice spring up and abundance of peace; and he shall rule from sea to sea." (Ps. LXXI. 4, 7, 8.) "The Lord shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke I.32.) "All peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve him; his kingdom shall not be destroyed." (Dan. VII.14.) "The Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty, and all the nations shall be gathered before him." (Matt. XXV. 31.) "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. XXVIII.18.) Some men will, indeed, resist and try to destroy this kingdom. "The kings and the princes of the earth met together against the Lord and against his Christ." (Ps. II. 2.) 'But the Lord shall laugh them to scorn.' (Ps. II. 4.) 'He will make all things subject to the Father, having first dispossessed every other sort of rule or power; His reign will continue till He has put all His enemies under his feet.' (1 Cor. XV. 24.)

This kingdom of universal power is ruled over by an everlasting priest: He who is to rule in the midst of His enemies is a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech. (Ps. CIX. 2-4.) The Messiah is to be a priest who rules men by sanctifying them in justice and peace. (Hebr. VII.1-10.)

His kingdom is one of light (of truth and splendour) as contrasted with the power of darkness (of error and shame). "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; to them that dwelt in the shadow of death, light is risen." (Is. IX. 2.) "Arise, be enlightened, for thy light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; behold, darkness covers the earth, but upon thee, the Lord shall rise and his glory shall be seen upon thee." (Is. LX.1.) "Render thanks to the Father Who hath fitted us for our portion of the inheritance of the saints in light. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son." (Cols. I.12.) "For the upright of heart, there has risen in the darkness a light—the merciful and compassionate Lord." (Antiphon, 1st Vespers, Sacred Heart.)

The last passage strikes the note which recurs most often in the New Testament and in the liturgy—that it is a kingdom of love. The whole plan of setting up the kingdom on earth is one that springs from love; Christ Himself is conceived of the Holy Ghost who is the spirit of love. "For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son; and he sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by him." (John III. 16.) 'God on various occasions and in different manners spoke in earlier times to the fathers; in these latter days, He has spoken to us by His own Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things. This Son upholds all things by the word of His power, sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' (Heb. I.1.) It is our privilege as Christians to learn of 'the unsearchable riches of Christ, the mystery hidden from the beginning of time in the mind of God the Creator'; we must try to see, 'in all its breadth and length and height and depth, the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.' (Eph. III.8,9,19.)

The combination of absolute power with perfect love makes Christ's kingdom something unique, something endlessly mysterious and wonderful—"full of unsearchable riches." The weapon by which He subdues His enemies, the throne from which He rules is the cross; for it is by the cross that He shows His love, by the cross He wins His power, by the cross He draws men to Himself as loving subjects. "God hath reigned from the cross", sings the church in the Feast of the Finding of the Cross; this feast as a whole celebrates the triumph and the power of Christ's love. In the invitorium at the beginning of the Divine Office, we say, "Let us adore Christ, our crucified King." The secret prays, "By the standard of the holy Cross of Thy Son may the snares of the enemy be crushed." The communion: "By the sign of the Cross, deliver us, O Lord, from our enemies." Christ, that is, has won for us a perfect triumph over the enemies of our salvation through His cross, and He calls on us to share in that triumph. As the postcommunion strongly puts it: "From the malignant enemy protect us who triumph at Your command through the Cross of Your Son." "With an everlasting love hath God loved us; therefore lifted up from the earth, He hath drawn us to His own Heart, taking pity on us." (Sext Antiphon, Feast of the Sacred Heart.)



To say that Christ rules over His kingdom from the cross is to say that He rules by love. The five feasts in which we honour Christ as king—the October feast, Corpus Christi, the Epiphany, the Finding of the Holy Cross, and the Sacred Heart—all bear out the notion of His kingdom as one of immense power, but as primarily one of love. The spirit of the Epiphany may be summed up in the lines:

"Deum regem venire quid times,  
Non erit mortalia  
Qui regna dat caelestia."

"Herod, why do you fear to see God coming as king? He does not deprive us of our temporal possessions—He bestows an eternal kingdom." If Christ comes to us as king, it is not merely to rule but to enrich. When the Israelites of old asked for a king, He warned them of the harsh and selfish way in which kings would treat them. Christ the king is at the opposite pole from all this. He is set up as ruler, not to lord it over anyone (God sent him not to judge the world), but to rescue us from enemies who can be overcome only by His strength, to enrich us with gifts which can come only from His kingly treasures. For His kingdom is one of truth and life, of sanctity and grace, of justice, of love and peace. (Preface of Christ the King.) Consequently the extending of the kingdom of Christ is no mere individual gratification for Christ, it is the means by which He reaches out to enrich all; so we must pray every day: "Thy kingdom come."

The limitless power which Christ possesses He exercises gently. "You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister; and he that will be first among you, shall be your servant." (Matt. XX.25.) Christ was here defining the spirit and the meaning of the authority which was to be exercised in His kingdom, a spirit of which He was the first to give us the example: "You call me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am; if I then, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (John XIII. 13.) St. Peter has brought out this gentleness of Christ's power in a brief phrase which has become one of the commonplaces of our faith: 'You were as sheep going astray; now you have been brought back to Him, your shepherd, who keeps watch over your souls.' (1 Pet. II.25.) It is so typical of Christ Himself that He describes His power under the image of the shepherd—an image which indicates both the complete power He enjoys (His unquestionable rights over His flock), and also the gentle solicitude He constantly entertains for His flock.

The kingdom over which this shepherd-priest rules is amply supplied with the pasture the sheep need. 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall want for nothing.' (Ps. XXII.1.) "I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." (Luke XXII. 29.) And what we eat and drink at His table in His kingdom is nothing less than Himself: "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." (John VI.54.) "He who rules over the nations gives richness of spirit to them who eat Him." (Invitatorium of Corpus Christi.) The Communion with Himself which He makes possible by the Eucharist is to be continued for ever in His eternal kingdom. The Beatific Vision

is to be the eternal prolonging of Holy Communion—the everlasting union in which we give ourselves entirely to Him, are united for ever to Him and are brought with Him into the very bosom of the Most Holy Trinity.

The stern power, the awful majesty of God must never be forgotten nor minimized; but as the psalm puts it: "When his anger shall be kindled, blessed are all they that trust in him." (Ps. II.13.) Christ sometimes overwhelms the sinner; but what He rather wishes to do is to overwhelm the sin, atoning for it and wiping it out in His blood. In a number of places in the Old Testament, but especially in the Psalms, mercy and anger are often mentioned together—to denote that there is a divine anger that destroys the sin in order to save the sinner. The sins of men are represented in Scripture as arousing the anger of God and as moving Him to forgiveness at the same time. Even after the stupendous miracles of the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites continued to sin against Him; they angered Him and doubted His power, asking: 'Can God feed us in this wilderness?' They did not believe in God, nor trust in His help. But God's anger was a strangely divine and understanding anger, for He commanded the clouds and rained down on them manna that they might eat their fill. (Cf. Ps. LXXVII.17-29.) In His dealings with us as with them, He may indeed punish us on account of our iniquities, but He will save us on account of His own mercy; He may scourge us, but He will deliver us; He may lead us down to the depths of suffering, but He will bring us back to joy. (Tobias XIII.5,2.) His anger endures but a moment, but His loving kindness for a lifetime; weeping may come in the evening, but gladness will succeed in the morning. (Ps. XXIX. 6.) From His dwelling of eternal peace, God has broken all the weapons of war; at His rebuke, all who trusted in their strength have been reduced to naught; ancient Pharaoh and Sennacherib, the Scribes and the Pharisees, are all overthrown, for there is none who can gainsay Him. (Ps. LXXV. 8.) In His supreme power He has proclaimed that He will lead forth from darkness and the shadow of death all those who cry to the Lord in their grief. (Ps. CVI.13,14.) In His anger He will destroy all the machinations of evil men in order to bring help to those who take refuge in Him. (Ps. II.9,11.)

In the light of the New Testament, this union of divine anger, power and love is not surprising. For if sin moves God to anger, the sinner moves Him to compassionate love; He uses His power to demonstrate His anger in a manner incomprehensible to man—the manner of the Passion, in which Christ bore the iniquity of all men; the manner in which He demonstrates His love is equally incomprehensible, for He dies on behalf of those who have insulted, injured and betrayed Him. For the power of Christ is the power of the cross—the power to save, to draw men's hearts to Himself. Christ has not only the power to win victories over His enemies, but has the still greater power to win over His enemies to His love. He excludes no one from this power of His love; the sinner can exclude himself only by cutting himself off from Christ's love by impenitence in mortal sin. But as long as the sinner lives, Christ desires only to triumph over him by love: "Do Thou, O Lord, with Thy sweet yoke, assert Thy rule in the midst of Thy enemies." (Antiphon, 1st Vespers, Sacred Heart.) The sweet yoke with which He would rule is the power of His Heart, of His love.

The unique combination of gentleness and love with absolute, unquestionable power in Christ's kingdom helps us to understand a little more clearly those terrible passages in the Old Testament in which dire threats are pronounced against the enemies of God. Sometimes, of course, these threats are the prediction of the terrible fate that is to overtake all the unrepentant in hell. But there is another sense which they will often bear. "My kingdom is not of this world," said Christ to Pilate. The least that this can mean is that Christ is not merely one competitor among many for power over men. His kingdom can exist side by side with other kingdoms, for no authority that is legitimate can conflict with His own, since it comes from Him. His kingdom does indeed exist in this world, and all are bound to recognize it and submit to it. But it is set up by methods very different from those used by any other kingdom; it has a vastly different spirit and purpose from any other kingdom. The difference may be noted especially in this that, while His power is terrible and irresistible, He often exercises His power in clemency; He can destroy his enemies either by simply reducing them to nothing, as He did with Julian; or by turning them into lovers, as He did with Paul. The prophecy in Daniel (II. 44.) which tells us of the kingdom which God will set up and which will destroy all other kingdoms, can be understood of Christ's church, which will not indeed wage war on the kingdoms of the earth, but will stand firm when all others have passed away.

### *The Unique Nature of Christ*

It is clear from these Scriptural and liturgical texts that the humanity of Christ now possesses the plenitude of power—over all men, and for ever. The time of His obedience—to Mary, to Joseph, to Pilate—is over, for there is now no one who is not subject to His power. This universal range of authority is closely bound up with the special qualities of His humanity and the special manner in which His humanity was turned to the salvation of the world. His humanity is perfectly real and concrete, but it is different from the humanity of anyone else, for He is not a human person but a divine person. His humanity being assumed into union with an infinite person has a universality which marks it off from that of anyone else. We may put this more simply by saying that through His human nature He assumed to Himself the guilt of all, He atoned for all, He inherited salvation for all. His love, His efficacy as Saviour, His subjection, His sufferings—all these were universal, excluding only that which is not compatible with His divine personality, as for example grief for personal sin. (The "Summa", III. Q. 46 a. 5. defines in what sense the sufferings of Christ were universal.) He was subject to every type of authority and of human need. He was subject to God, to holy men, to wicked men, to calumniators, to wicked judges, to torturers, to executioners; He was subject to the physical, material needs of human nature. "He fasted; afterwards he was hungry," says St. Matthew (IV. 2.); God though He was, He chose to assume to Himself our human needs as He assumed a human body and human soul. Because He became so completely subject to all things, He was set up above all things. "Thou hast placed all things beneath His feet." (Ps. VIII.8; Heb. II.8.) This quotation is particularly interesting because the Psalm describes the power given by God to mankind in general over the living things of the earth. The New Testament applies the words to Christ in a

special way, for in Christ mankind in general is elevated to a new power or authority over created things.

Human nature is subject to three things—to one's own will, to the will of others, and to human necessities. These necessities exist at various levels; at the lowest there is the need for food and drink; above that there is the need for companions and friends; highest of all comes the need for the goods of the intellect and will. Christ comes to sanctify, to elevate, and to absorb into Himself, the triple subjection of human nature. For He comes to us to be the supreme will, on whom we depend for all things; He comes to be the will of our will—the inner force of charity by which we live and move supernaturally; and He comes to be our food, our drink, our companion, our only joy, the satisfaction of all our needs.

Through Christ, mankind can face its necessities with a new hope. The misery of mankind is the consequence of the sins of mankind; and the sins are the result of the wrong kind of subjection to human needs. The appetites for food, for companionship, for the goods of the intellect and of the will are the remote sources of our sins. Gluttony and impurity are sins in which things have been turned upside down by the subjection of man to material things; pride, disobedience, all forms of lawlessness are sins in which things have been turned upside down by the attempt to subject the higher will to the lower. Temperance, chastity, humility, and all the other forms of divine love, are virtues by which Christ acts within us, setting the material world beneath our will, and setting our will beneath His. In so far as we allow Christ to be our inner life, our love and our joy, He sets up His reign within us, we become part of His kingdom, and we then "reign with Christ", for we are then in effect independent of *everything* except Christ. True subjection to Christ is the only road to true independence, to true liberty. The more we are subject to Christ, the more does God "put everything beneath our feet."

It is from this starting point and within this framework that the Christian must make any effort to improve the social, political or economic conditions of the world. Christianity is not itself a political or economic system; to look on it as a means of improving human affairs is to degrade it. It does however provide us with the spirit and purpose in which temporal problems should be faced. What we roughly call "economic conditions" (the amount of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc., at our disposal) are themselves the creatures of Christ; they have been created that He may exercise His power over them—that is, that men, by His grace and love, may make a proper use of them. An economic or political problem, however serious or pressing, is seen in proper proportion only when we see it as a challenge to our willingness to love Christ and be subject to Him. All problems are only parts of the great problem: How am I to make myself totally subject to Christ in love, and help to bring all others into loving subjection to Him?

The subjection of Christ—to God, to man, to human necessities—is seen most clearly in His Passion. His love for God, for man, was always, of course, limitless; but it is particularly through His Passion that we human beings can grasp something of what it means to be loved by God on a limitless scale; for in His Passion Christ sacrificed everything to God, for man. It is

from this limitless or universal love that there springs His limitless or universal power,—a power which He Himself sums up so simply: "All power is given me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. XXVIII. 18.)

The power which Christ claims in this text in Matthew is threefold:

- 1) the power vested in all rulers, temporal and spiritual;
- 2) the power vested in the human will—the power of the individual over himself;
- 3) power over sin:
  - a) power to wipe out sin: to atone for the guilt of sin, to destroy the effects of sin (guilt, inclination to further sin, suffering and death);
  - b) power to use sin to forgive sin, power to turn sin against itself.

Wherever power of any sort is exercised, it is a power derived from Christ; whoever exercises power, whoever obeys, must do so in the light of the total derivation of power from Christ. The prince who rules, the priest who absolves, would have no power if it were not given them from above; the citizen keeping just laws, the religious keeping his rule, obey Christ.

The special nature of the power of the Sacred Heart is given to us in the invocation of the Litany: *Rex et centrum omnium cordium*: the centre of authority is a centre of love. His Heart is of infinite majesty, truly the ruler of the whole universe, the king of all rational beings; His Heart is also of infinite tenderness, loving, merciful, ever ready to welcome the sinner, however great his sin, however weak his nature. The Heart then reigns over men:

- by His authority: commanding in the name of a power which is absolute, eternal, irresistible;
- by His love: continually showing to men the infinite treasures of love and goodness hid in His Heart.

### **CHRIST'S POWER AS KING**

We can see in Christ the final (supernatural) *end* of all authority, and the *kind* of authority which is set up in the universe by the Incarnation.

### ***The Purpose of Authority***

God has given men (rulers, popes, superiors) authority over other men as a small scale image of the absolute and universal authority given to the man Christ. Both the right use and the abuse of this authority help us to see the universal and unlimited excellence of the authority of Christ. In the thought of the overriding excellence of Christ's power, we find the highest compensation for defects of government in church and state. Human authority is a means by which men may subject themselves to the human nature of Christ. By the Incarnation, God's

power over men is now exercised by a man, the man who is God. So for men (as it was possibly for angels), the great testing ground for men's love of God is acceptance of the authority of Christ. He who rejects it wholly, wholly rejects God. He who accepts it weakly, lukewarmly, to that extent cuts himself from Christ. He who accepts it whole-heartedly, lovingly, firmly, fulfils the condition on which alone Christ will exercise His authority over him, saving him from sin and death.

### ***Kind of Authority***

Christ, being given full and universal authority, cannot bate or minimize His authority in any degree: His humility could not lead Christ to exempt anyone from His authority, for His humility is in perfect conformity with the will of the Father. Neither in time nor in eternity, can Christ minimize His authority in the tiniest degree.

Yet His authority is such that love is an integral part of it. Only over the damned does Christ exercise only authority: to all others, He makes every act of authority an act of love. So while He must exercise His authority over all, He *wishes* to exercise it in the highest way, that is, by love, by getting our loving, ready acceptance of it. Christ is a unique king, because His power is inseparable from His tender, compassionate love. We must be careful not to repeat the mistake of Herod and imagine that Christ is come on earth either to set up a merely human rule or to take anything away from us. The church rebukes Herod with the words: *Non eripit mortalia qui regna dat caelestia*. He comes, not to take temporal goods away, but to give an everlasting kingdom.

And yet He does wish to take something away from us, to take away the one thing we want to part with least—our hearts. But He wishes to take our hearts, because only by our freely giving them to Him can He do with them what He desires—purify them, sanctify them, immensely enrich them. He takes them, not so much to deprive us of them, as to make them His own, and thereby make them more truly and more firmly ours. He takes them to fill them, not only with divine gifts, but with Himself; and of this process Communion is the perfection and culmination.

In this act of Divine Providence, by which all power is given to Christ, we have great opportunities and great dangers.

### ***Great Opportunities***

The consideration of Christ's power cannot be separated from the consideration of His love; that is, the recognition of His authority cannot be separated from true devotion to His Heart. All the authority He exercises radiates from a Heart filled full with love. Every legitimate

command, whoever issues it, under whatever conditions it may be issued, whatever the human appearances may be, issues ultimately from infinite love, from One who loves us endlessly and acts and commands only out of love. Only the damned are cut off from that love.

The more we are convinced of this love of Christ—an individual, personal love for each one of us, a love that perfectly knows our weaknesses and difficulties—the easier we shall find it to obey Him, no matter who may be the human being by whom He chooses to exercise His power to command, even to exhort or to plead with us. This greater ease in obeying is not necessarily a matter of greater enjoyment or pleasure, because our obedience will inevitably at times resemble the obedience of Christ in the Garden and in the Passion. Like Him, we may be moved to pray: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me." (Matt. XXVI. 39.)

The greater ease in obeying is a matter of stronger, firmer, clearer motives, a more generous spirit of obedience, a greater spur to obey, whatever the difficulties may be—motives and a spirit that will enable us to say at all times: "Not my will but thine be done."

### *Great Dangers*

Christ chooses to draw us to Himself by love rather than by mere threats or commands. He *does* command, He *does* threaten, for He will use any means that may draw men closer to Himself; even to the most holy persons He addresses the ancient message: "Yea, I say to you, my friends, fear him who hath power to cast into hell." (Luke XII.5.) Yet what He desires is not mere fear, not even mere obedience, or mere justice, the mere fulfilling of duties. He desires obedience out of love: "I will not call you servants but friends." (John XV.15.) Love is a higher virtue in the divine scheme than even justice.

But precisely because Christ wishes to draw us by love rather than by fear, we have ampler opportunities to be unfaithful to Him, untrue to His spirit. Fear comes more easily to our fallen, self-centred human nature than does love; and while there is a place for fear in the Christian concept of life, that concept becomes less truly Christian in proportion as fear drives out love, for it is the plan of Christ that love should become perfect and drive out fear (1 John IV.18.); we have not received the spirit of slavery to be once more in fear, we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we call God our 'Father'. (Roms. VIII. 14.) So, he that fears has not yet been made perfect in love. (1 John IV.18.) At the same time we must remember that there is a fear which is merely a perfection of love itself—the fear of injuring the beloved in any way. This fear, being an integral part of love, grows with love, and will be driven out only by death, since death alone makes further sin impossible. The fear, however, which thinks primarily of possible injury to oneself is a fear which is not yet sufficiently divine; the more divine it becomes, the more our attention is directed from ourselves to Him who has a right to all our service and to all our love. Perfectly unselfish love is not a love which has no thought of self, but a love which thinks of self only in relation to Christ.

The transition from the fear which is that of slavery (Rom. VIII. 14.) to the fullness of that fear which is one of the great gifts of the Holy Ghost is a long and difficult transition. It requires, not indeed perfect generosity (for we cannot be perfect in generosity till we are perfect in love); but it does require a consistent *effort* towards perfect generosity; it requires not only the avoidance of mortal and of venial sin, but also some desire to do everything as perfectly as possible. Every sin, every deliberate imperfection prolongs the state of servile fear to some extent. And part of Christ's suffering in His Passion was the realization of how slow men are in responding to His appeal for perfect love. As we grow in love, we realize more and more acutely the constant danger we are in of hurting that Heart which has loved us so intensely. If Christ did not expect so much from us, and long for it so ardently, we would not have had the same power to hurt Him in His Passion.

We find it all the easier to hurt Him since we have so little knowledge of how powerfully, how intimately He is working to bring our love to perfection. We have in this world no direct experience of the way in which Christ has consecrated our whole being to the great task of loving Him perfectly—consecrating our intellect by faith, our will by charity, our whole mind by sanctifying grace and the gifts. We cannot in our present ignorance comprehend the constant manner in which He is at work within us. Hence we tend to seek our own good or happiness by the natural light of reason (forgetting faith), by the activity of our own will (forgetting charity). "For all look to their own ends, not to those of Jesus Christ." (Phils. II. 21.) So we are inclined to forget the threats—since we understand even the threats only in proportion to our love, our charity. We are inclined also to content ourselves with avoiding mortal sin, with the attendant danger of reconciling ourselves to mediocrity, to small deliberate sins, to tepidity—reconciling ourselves to all those things by which people in the state of grace cause so much pain to the Sacred Heart.

Christ, we may say, is aiming at and working for the very highest kind of perfection possible to man through grace; this perfection must come from and be rooted in *love* above all else. This very high ideal involves *Him* in the great danger that it is now easier for man to reject Him and His authority—reject Him totally, finally, disastrously by death in mortal sin; or totally, but temporarily by mortal sin that is forgiven, or partially, by deliberate venial sin and tepidity. Yet He presents the claims of His loving authority, of His powerful love, in such a way as to draw us away from all sin, from all rejection of His authority. We may note three principles of Divine Providence.

1. It is so characteristic of our Heavenly Father that He has united in one place—in the Heart of His Son—all authority and all claim on our love. There is no authority anywhere which is not derived from the Sacred Heart; there can be no decent love anywhere which is not in some way a love for Christ, for whatever we do to others, we do it to Him. The very Man whom we are bound to obey is the very Man who has a perfect claim on *all* the love we can possibly give anyone. It is in this way that the Father shows us how we should love and how we should obey.



2. Effective and meritorious obedience is possible only when it springs from charity, that is, from the power by which we love God above all things. Where charity is present, obedience does much more than conform our will to another human being's—it unites our will to Christ's, to God's. It is for this reason that obedience is so efficacious in strengthening, and disobedience is so virulent in weakening, the bonds between Christ and ourselves.
3. Christ's love for us, His unreserved devotedness to us (pushed to the extreme point of dying for us) imply in Him a deep *respect* for us—for us as human beings created by the infinite power of His Father and as divine beings elevated to a share in the divine life of the Trinity, and called through Christ's priesthood to a most intimate share in the work of God for men.

As we know from our human experience, respect extends not only to those above us, but also to those equal to us and to those under us. We respect brothers and sisters; a decent ruler (prince, president, dictator) can have a respect for the meanest of his subjects—seeing their true human worth; much more can Christ respect our human and divine worth, especially since He has gone out of His way to make Himself *our* equal, and make us *His* equal by the Incarnation.

While we are on earth, Christ's love for us and His authority over us do not exist in separated parts of His mind—all the authority He exercises over us is coloured by His love, His love and His authority are inextricably blended. So we must remember that every command He issues, however it comes to us, by whatever human means it comes to us, is a command coming from His infinitely loving Heart. Disobedience is a rejection not only of His authority, but of His love; while love and obedience are both important, love is more important than obedience; and it is particularly the rejection of His love that wounds His Heart. And the greater His claims on our love, the more does our rejection wound Him. If it were merely an enemy who insulted Him, He could bear it; if disobedience came merely from those who hate Him, He could hide the hurt within His Heart; but He cannot be silent, He must voice His grief when the evil comes from His friend, His companion, with whom He has enjoyed sweet comradeship, with whom He has walked in the house of -God. (Ps. **LIV.13-15.**)

### **CHRIST'S POWER AS LOVER**

Christ's second power is that over the individual will, the individual heart. Obviously the kind of kingdom He proposes to set up on earth and in eternity (for this life is the beginning of eternity) is not a kingdom of mere external obedience, of merely doing the things He commands; it is a kingdom which is primarily set up within the heart of individual men. There are two conclusions that follow from this.

- a) If we wish to have any part in the spreading of the kingdom of Christ, if we wish to work for Him in any way, the first thing we must aim to do is to give our own heart ever more and more fully to Christ. And so personal sanctification is the root and the starting point of all effective ministry, whether of priest or of lay person.
- b) While Christ works on us from the outside—by the words and examples of others—He Himself always continues to work on us from inside, by sanctifying grace, the virtues and the gifts. These are, so to speak, the point at which the work of Christ and our own work become one; because whenever the virtues or the gifts are called into activity, Christ is at work and we are at work, both He and we are producing the one virtuous act. Christ is really and truly within us, He really and truly lives in us, our life is the life of Christ, our life is hid with Christ in God. (Cols. **III**. 3.)

Each of us has authority over himself—over his body, his mind, his conduct—because of free will. Christ is now invested with the very authority we have ourselves. Our life is hid with Christ, because God wishes that our life, our perfection, should be incorporated into the life, the perfection of Christ. God gives us authority over our individual selves for the same reason as He invests Christ with the plenitude of power—namely that the created universe may be fully but freely dedicated to the service and love of God. Free will is free in the best sense only by obedience to law; without that, man becomes a slave, a slave to sin, to evil inclinations. Even if there were only the natural order, man could be really free only on the condition that he submitted the use of his freedom to the will of God; and man's freedom is at present so limited because man, in the person of Adam, rejected the will of God, and became subject to sin, and to the consequences of sin. In the supernatural order, man is free only by submission to Christ who is the head of all things. The more perfectly he is subject to Christ, the more perfectly is he free. The power of Christ over the human will, far from destroying free will, completes and sanctifies it. For Christ not only commands us from outside ourselves, but lives and acts within us, absorbing into Himself the very force by which we direct ourselves in deliberate or free choice. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." (John I. 17.) Moses could teach us the law, tell us what are our obligations; Christ alone could act within us, prompting us and guiding us to fulfill the law. And Christ has sealed and signed His possession of our free will by sanctifying grace and charity—a seal which no one outside ourselves, not all the devils of hell leagued together, can ever remove.

Christ's authority over our minds and bodies He wishes to exercise by love—by getting our loving, ready, willing consent to it. The very power which we have over ourselves is a share in *His* power over us, and must be exercised in the light of this derivation from Christ. Our will comes from Him as God, the consecration and sanctification of it comes from Him as man-God. It is His right to command and to insist on obedience; but this by itself does not satisfy the demands of His Heart, for His Heart wants our obedience to come from love. And the more we love Him, the more will He exercise His power over us by love. The more we love Him, the more will He, by charity, lead us into the most perfect use of our body, mind, will. 'Whatever has been made has been created for Christ.' (Prayer to Christ the King.) The whole of creation was

brought out of nothing by the infinite power of God that Christ might rule over it; of that creation, the highest natural part is the free will, the heart. God gave us a heart for one purpose—that Christ might have complete dominion over it. And in the marvellous dispensation of Divine Providence, Christ can have complete dominion over our heart by love alone.

This dominion of Christ over our wills is put very strongly in several places in the liturgy. In Prime, for example, we ask the 'Saviour of the world': *dirigere... regere et gubernare dignare... corda et corpora nostra*. To 'direct, rule and govern our hearts and our bodies' are the prerogatives of the will shaping human conduct; they are also the prerogatives of Christ acting within the will by grace. Similarly in the prayers before Communion, we ask Him: "make me always cling to thy commandments." The inner modality of this inner action of Christ is, of course, profoundly mysterious. All that we know for certain is that it is as efficacious as Christ wishes to make it, and that it leaves, nay makes, the will free. "Compel our wills to Thee, even when they rebel against Thee." (Secret, 4th Sunday after Pentecost.)

The source of this strong, gentle power which Christ exercises over our wills from within the will itself is in the Incarnation, in the personal union of man with God. Since all actions are performed by persons, and since in Christ there are two wills, human and divine, but only one divine Person, it follows that there can never be any conflict between the human will and the divine will of Christ. The human will comes so completely under the guidance of the divine will that, as man, Christ can desire nothing but what is perfectly in conformity with the will of God. It is the aim of Christ to establish similar conditions in each human will, to have each will act always in perfect conformity with the divine will, to wish only what God wishes. This conformity will never become unbreakable in this world; but at each moment we can get nearer to the condition in which (in the Beatific Vision) it will be impossible for us (as it is impossible for Christ) to will anything but what God wills. It is the plan of Christ that His divinity should exercise over all men the same gentle, complete power which it exercises over His humanity.

Christ then desires to reign over us by love; by this reign, He is and He does what no other ruler can be or can do—He is actually within us, actually ruling, guiding us from within. He lives in our hearts to ever increase His kingdom over our hearts, to bring us more and more under the sway of His love. Every deliberate use we make of our faculties, every free choice we make by will, is the exercise of a power given to us by Christ, and consecrated to God by Christ. So in the order set up by Divine Providence, we cannot use our free will without (implicitly, at least) accepting or rejecting the authority of Christ. "Christ is ruler by virtue of the hypostatic union, because of which He has power over all creatures. He has this, not only as natural right, but as acquired right. We are no longer our own property, but Christ has bought us 'at a great price.' Our very bodies are the members of Christ." (*Quas Primas*, § 16.) Christ's will has power over body and soul, for we are part of His body. We can see here too something of the power which Christ exercises over the *intellect*, a power exercised through the virtue of faith and the connected gifts. Since Christ's power over man comes mainly from His love for man, His power is over the *whole* man—love will be content with nothing less than the whole of the beloved. Thus Christ has power over the whole of our being, including the intellect. The intellect is not, of

itself, a free faculty; but it comes under Christ's power in conjunction with the will, since the will decides nothing by itself. For the will to act rightly, it is necessary that the intellect be properly enlightened, and Christ "is the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." (John I.9.) Christ enlightens the intellect by the virtues which clarify the mind, make the practical judgment in particular cases easier, speedier, more secure. Christ enlightens us chiefly by love which, above all else, shows us everything in true proportion, and so urges us, inclines us to judge everything in true proportion.

Generosity is of the highest importance, because it leads Christ to exercise this enlightening force on us in those temptations and inclinations which are likely to be strong in the mind before we realize that they *are* temptations. It is also by generosity towards Christ that we escape the tyranny which might be exercised over us by human love. The creature's love for creatures is decent and noble only within the limits set by divine love; outside these limits, it easily becomes a tyranny. We realize this most readily in the case of sexual passion and in intemperance. But it is true in all those cases in which a man would like to act in the right way, but does act in the wrong way. There is the tyranny of custom, of human respect, and of many other subtle forms of self-love. The stronger our attraction towards creatures for their own sakes, the greater the tyranny they exert over us; the stronger our attraction towards Christ, and the greater our love for His Heart, the freer we are.

### **CHRIST'S POWER AS SAVIOUR**

Christ's third kind of power is that over sin. This power has two phases:

- a) the power to forgive sin;
- b) the power to turn sinful acts to the forgiving of sin.

a) Sin, considered in itself, has about it something final and irrevocable, for man is completely unable by himself to remove even the smallest sin. The vast apparatus set up by Christ for forgiving and atoning for sin is a vast act of divine love. It implies the power of God to destroy sin itself. God does not use any "as if" philosophy. He does not act after sin merely "as if" we had not sinned. And the sin itself is, in some mysterious way, blotted out, reduced to nothingness. It is really wiped out by Christ's atonement, as the church teaches against the errors of Luther. The Council of Trent uses the analogy of a pecuniary debt which is truly and fully removed by cancellation—the debt no longer exists. The explanation, as far as it can be discerned in the darkness of faith, lies in the union which grace establishes between the former sinner and the perfect sinless humanity of Christ. "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Roms. VIII.1.) "Dei Alius sibi assumpsit humanam naturam reparandam." (*Miserentissimus*, § 10.) "The Son of God took to Himself human nature which was in need of restoration."

God the Son took to Himself our human nature that in Him it might be perfectly restored. The full effects of the Incarnation will not be felt till the number of the elect is complete, for only then will the restoration be full and everlasting; only then will His triumph over sin be fully evident, only then will He have wiped out all our guilt, removed all suffering and all inclination towards sin, and won the final victory over death.

b) Christ's power to turn sin against sin itself.

Christ's divine power over sin is such that He is able to turn sin itself towards the destruction of sin. The sins which are now being committed inflicted injury on Christ in His Passion, and by suffering this injury He wipes out sin. This notion occurs strikingly in several places in the liturgy. For example in the Hymn of the First Vespers of the Sacred Heart, we are reminded that all of us who are sinners have had a part in putting Christ to death:

Vibrantis hastam militis Peccata nostra dirigunt,  
Ferrumque dirae cuspidis Mortale crimen acuit.

("It was our sins which guided the hand of the soldier who brandished the spear; it was our deadly transgressions which thrust the point of the spear into His Heart.")

Our grievous sins are "mortal", not only because they kill sanctifying grace in the soul, but also because they have killed Christ. And it was by allowing Himself to be put to death that Christ 'brought life into the world.' (Ordinary of the Mass, second prayer before Communion.)

In much the same way, the Hymn at Lauds of Many Martyrs asks Christ to overcome our sins:

Tu vincis inter martyres...  
Tu vince nostra crimina,  
Largitor indulgentiae.

"The martyrs owe their victory to Thee; do Thou, who art so rich in mercy, give us victory over our sins." Christ overcomes sin, not in a mere general or abstract way, but by overcoming sin in each human being; and this He does by His blood which each sinner has had some share in shedding. "It was the will of God that our offences should be expiated by the blood of His only begotten Son... Who suffered a most cruel death, the just for the unjust." (1 Pet. III.18.) (*Catechism of the Council of Trent*. Part I. The Creed, Article X.) Since forgiveness is "not limited as to sins, persons, or time" (*ibid*), the salutary, forgiving act of Christ is spread over all sins, all persons, all time. The forgiveness which comes to us in Christ's Passion is wrought by the shedding of Christ's blood, that is, by means of the very crimes committed against Christ. He used the cruelty, the insults, the injustice of His trial and execution for the very purpose of forgiving sin, thereby defeating, overcoming sin most radically and completely.

Christ Himself tells us that the crimes committed against Him are not all confined to His own mortal life on earth, because "whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me." (Matt. XXV. 40.) And so, His power to draw justice and sanctification out of iniquity is not limited to His mortal life, but goes on forever. His power over sin is so transcendent that the very sins we commit against Him are turned by Him into the means of sanctification. The sensual man by his sin wields the lash that cuts into the flesh of Christ, drawing from it the blood that can redeem the sensual man. The proud man who insults Christ by driving into His Head the crown of thorns, draws the blood that forgives pride. The unjust man who oppresses the weak or poor, orders the Crucifixion from which comes the salvation of the world. Thus the Passion of Christ is spread out over the whole of human history; His Heart, which suffers all that men can do to Him, turns all into love, uses all things as a means of showing His love. What St. Paul says of all is true in a special way of Christ: "To those who love God, all things work together unto good." (Roms. VIII.28.) And St. Augustine could add: "All things, even our sins." Christ's power is so transcendent, so universal, so effective, that it can transform anything into love. All things are summed up, brought to a head, in Christ. (Eph. I.22.) All things are in Him that He may remove sin and its effects from all, and may make of the whole universe a perfect offering to the Father. No other power can resist this power of Christ; God will laugh all His enemies to scorn (Ps. II. 4.); but it is the plan of God that we should be numbered with Christ among the lovers of God, not with Satan among His enemies; to the lovers of God, all things, even their past sins, will work unto their eternal good.

All things are given into the keeping of Christ that He may fill all things with His love. "All things are yours, you are Christ's and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. III. 23.) All things are His that He may consecrate all, consecrate the whole universe, and offer it as something acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

It is necessary to look at this consecration in two ways: a) from the point of view of what is done by Christ in His temporal life; b) from the point of view of what is done by Christ in His immortal or glorious life.

a) In a real sense, the work of redeeming and sanctifying men is complete at the moment of the ascension (and we should remember that the Mass is offered to commemorate the resurrection and ascension as well as the Passion), because by that moment Christ had fulfilled His temporal mission, He had done all He was to do in His visible presence on earth; all that was to follow was to be a drawing-out, an application of the merits of His temporal life. By His blood, by His death, He redeemed the world.

b) Yet though perfect and complete in itself, Christ's work was still to be completed by the work of Christ in individual souls, to the end of time. By this action in His immortal and mystical life, Christ was to pass on to other men the effects of what He had accomplished in human flesh on earth. And one of the simplest ways of describing this mystical action of Christ is to say that not only does He act within the souls of men, but He gives to men the power to act within the souls

of men. All power is given to Him, and He communicates some of this power to other men. Hence the vast significance of His last acts:

- 1) He institutes the Mass and the priesthood, communicating to men the power of making His redemptive act (the Passion) the possession of all men, of all time and of all place.
- 2) He institutes the Eucharist, the tangible symbol and the transcendent reality of our sharing, communicating with Christ, a communion by which He becomes ours, we become His, and all things, in proportion to our state of love, are shared in common between Christ and ourselves.
- 3) He institutes the power of forgiving sins. This, like the Mass, is given in a special way to priests who alone have the power of consecrating the bread and wine, and who alone have the power of absolution. Yet like the Mass, the power of forgiving is something in which the church as a whole shares. Just as *all* offer the Mass, all can work effectively for the forgiving of sins.
- 4) He promises the Holy Ghost who would *teach* the church all things, maintaining in the church and in individual men the divine wisdom needed to carry out and perfect the work of Christ; the Holy Spirit would also *abide* in the church, giving to the church as a whole and to individuals the grace and strength needed to *do* the work.

### ***We Share in Christ's Power Over Sin***

Each one then, in proportion to his call from God, and to his degree of love, shares in the very powers by which Christ redeems the world. For it was the divine plan to give to human nature the maximum share in its own redemption; God became man, and came to live and to work in each man. All this power, all this magnificent share in the divine nature, is the gift of the Sacred Heart, for it is given to us by love.

One of the powers He communicates to us is His own divine power over sin—both the power to forgive sin, and the power to turn sin toward the forgiving of sin; and this in two ways:

- a) We have power over our own sins. We cannot of course forgive the sins we have committed. But as love brings us to a clearer and more intimate understanding of the offence sin is against the goodness of God, love prompts us to love Him all the more to make up for our past sins. Our very sins have been foreseen by God and a positive role assigned to them in the work of our sanctification. Sin, considered as an outrage against the kindness of God, becomes a motive for loving God more—a motive renewed and intensified every time we consider sin aright. So, while no one can absolve himself from sin, everyone can do much to remove guilt, and to diminish the inclination towards sin

which comes from sin itself. We find this idea already implied in the Old Testament. Daniel exhorted King Nabuchodonosor to 'redeem his sins with alms, and his iniquities with works of mercy to the poor.' (Dan. IV. 24.) The angel informed Tobias that 'alms deliver from death, purge away sin, and help us to find mercy and life everlasting.' (Tob. XII. 9.) The Old Testament puts the emphasis on the atoning power of almsgiving; the New Testament teaching that *whatever* is done to others is done to Christ would lead us to believe that by alms, in these texts, we may now understand brotherly love in general. And we need not be surprised that *our* acts of charity have a redemptive quality, since all redemption springs from the vast act of brotherly love which Christ performed on Calvary.

b) We have power over the sins of others. Christ saved the world by turning to good purposes the sins committed against Himself. In the same way we can use the sins, either great or small, committed against ourselves. This is particularly true of those who are martyrs in the strict sense; they save themselves, they help to save others, by the very act of violence which kills them. But the principle holds true of all, since all are martyrs in some sense—since all must give up their lives for Christ. (Matt. XVI.25.) Injustice, detraction, calumny, spite, envy, jealousy, harshness, coldness, bitterness, cruelty—these are the very things which human nature most readily rebels against and wishes to revenge; yet these are also the very things by which Christ redeemed the world, and by which we too can work for the redemption of all—but only on the condition that we see them and use them in the way of Christ. He experienced them; He deigns to allow us too to experience them, in order that we may share in His saving power. And so Pius XI counsels us to use for the purpose of expiation the sorrows and pains of our daily lives. (*Miserentissimus* §20.) It is in the same way that Paul declares that all who wish to live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution (2 Tim. III.12); for we become one with Him in His resurrection (that is, in His triumph over sin) only by becoming one with Him in His sufferings. (Roms. VI.5; 2 Tim. II.12.)

Christ's power over sin is seen in His power over hatred, calumny, bitterness. As a matter of fact, the very existence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart today is an unmistakable proof of Christ's power to triumph over coldness and indifference, over hatred and opposition, over calumny and lying, over torture and death. Men used every means known to men to destroy the influence, the appeal of Christ. The very fact that this devotion to Christ is so widespread today is a standing proof of how signally and completely men failed, because Christ drew His appeal from His temporary defeat at the hands of His enemies. It was by the cross that men thought they had disposed of Christ for good; it is by the cross that Christ appeals to men of all time for their love; it is by the cross that He wins His triumph.

Christ's power here symbolizes and causes the power of His church. The church, being Christ, undergoes the same determined effort of men to destroy her and her influence; she undergoes the same coldness, hatred, calumny and torture. But ever the church triumphs, Christ continues to triumph in His church. And what is even more remarkable to our human minds than



the triumph itself is the fact that the triumph is again (in the case of the church now, as formerly in the case of Christ) drawn out of temporary defeat and failure. As soon as the Roman emperors grasped what the church was about, they loosed a thorough, prolonged and brutal persecution. The weakness of that powerful empire was all the more evident in contrast with the abiding strength and vigour of the thing it wished to kill. And this will be the history, in some manner, of Christ and His church to the end of time. 'For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.' (Ps. XLIII.23; Roms. VIII.36.) In the beginning, now and for ever, Christ has the power, when He wishes, to change enmity and hatred into love; and even when He allows wicked men their will for a time, His promise of final triumph still stands firm.

Lest we seem to have got too far away from devotion to the Sacred Heart, let us remind ourselves of a basic principle: the devotion to the Sacred Heart is that which establishes our *oneness* with Christ. It must be a oneness of sympathy and of action; not sympathy indeed in the sense of a vain, superficial feeling, confined to the emotions, but a sympathy that really penetrates our heart, governs our mind and will and prompts us by love to enter into the experience and actions of Christ, that is, to live our lives, to pass through our experiences with the mind, the Heart of Christ, to live the life of Christ.

### ***We Share in His Power by Sharing in His Virtues***

Baptism is to us what the Incarnation is to the man Christ: it is that by which our human nature begins to live a life truly divine. It must then bring forth fruits worthy of such beginnings; the divine life must produce divine works. We must see ourselves, our companions, all those around us, the whole human race, all we do, all that is done to us, we must see everything not merely by the light of what our human intellect shows us in them, but by the light of faith, by that great light which God has shed on earth by the Incarnation. "Arise, be enlightened, for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." (Is. LX.1.) The brightness which shone from the angel (Luke II.9.), the star which guided the Magi—these are but the image of the Eternal Light which "enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." (John I. 9.) That divine light shines on us and on all around us, showing us, far more clearly than the most penetrating human scrutiny, what is man's nature and destiny, and what is the immense role God has assigned to him in setting up on earth the kingdom of God, the kingdom of justice, peace and love. If we are to accomplish that great work, it must be by living the life of Christ, for there is no other name than His whereby we can be saved. (Acts IV.12.)

There are many ways of living the life of Christ, many of seeing with *His* mind, of feeling with *His* Heart; that is, there are many ways of sharing in Christ's power over sin. Of these many, two are particularly worth attention: obedience and charity. These are focal points in the Christian life obligatory on all; they have the great practical advantages that they are always difficult to some extent (and consequently, if we look at them in the right way, are always

something of a stimulating challenge), and the opportunities to practise them are abundant and easy to find.

Obedience is a special share in the Passion because the Passion is a special kind of obedience. He went to His Passion with the prayer on His lips: "Not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke XXII.42.) Thus He began the great work of redemption by echoing the words of His mother by which the Incarnation was accomplished: "Be it done to me according to thy word." (Luke I.38.) He became obedient, obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross.

Christ practised this perfect obedience, accepting not only the most holy will of His Father, but also the consequences of the most sinful will of men. He made Himself subject to the will of Peter who denied Him, to the will of Judas who betrayed Him, to the will of Pilate who ordered Him to be scourged and to be put to death; He submitted because it was the will of His Father that He should submit, and submit under all the circumstances that make obedience painful. And by this obedience He saved the world. Unless He has appointed martyrdom as the way of our salvation, we shall never have to suffer in obedience as He did. But whatever pains or difficulties obedience presents to us, let us remember that we are living the Passion of Christ over again, and saving the world with Him. (Of course, even in the most heroic imitation of Christ, we are not obliged to obey, and *may* be obliged to disobey, unjust commands.)

In truly Christian obedience, we must distinguish between doing the right thing and doing it for the right motive. It is not efficient service that Christ primarily desires in commanding obedience, but opportunities to lavish His gifts on us and to be loved by us—for the more we love Him, the more open is our heart to receive what He wishes to bestow. A very vital and intimate connection is thus set up between obedience and love—any act which strengthens either virtue tends to make the other more active. No one can obey meritoriously without love (as no one can love without obeying), and no one can maintain a truly supernatural obedience without maintaining the effort towards truly supernatural love.

One of the first forms of supernatural love that Christ insisted on was the readiness to forgive all injuries, even the most unjust. (Matt. VI. 15.) This particular form of charity, like the general virtue of charity, is no after-thought or mere addition to the Christian life; Christ made it obligatory on all, and not a thing to be reserved to those with a special call, as the priesthood or the religious life. This inscrutable and difficult doctrine He began to preach at the very beginning. Matt. V. 44: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you and pray for them that persecute you and calumniate you." And to keep us always in mind of this doctrine, He put it very explicitly into the great prayer, His own prayer. There is here something more, and more effective, than a mere imitation of Christ—it is a matter of letting the very virtues of Christ be *our* virtues, of living in Him, of sharing in His power over sin, His power of turning sin to good; it is in reality a matter of being so joined to the Sacred Heart that we become with Him the Saviour of the world. While this disposition towards injuries is demanded of all, it becomes spontaneous, readily exercised only when we have taken on a very close fellow-feeling with Christ, a deep inner transformation into Christ. Yet the intention

of arriving at this high and difficult perfection must be present from the beginning; otherwise, says Christ, we cannot pray; and if we cannot pray, we can do nothing.

Our charity must be universal. We must not only forgive and bless our enemies, but must exercise charity still more positively by doing all the good we can to others—by action and by prayer. The obedience of Christ derived its steadfastness and its efficacy (for our salvation) from love. And love, even when it has nothing painful about it, even where it prompts us to do what our human nature prompts us to do, partakes of the saving charity of Christ. 'Even the cup of cold water shall not go without its reward.' (Matt. X. 42.) And there is nothing merely selfish about this "reward", it is a reward not only of glory hereafter, but also of grace here, that is, of increased efficacy in working for our salvation and for that of others. The most trivial, as the most enjoyable, act can be efficacious in this way.

The other test of our charity is our readiness to suffer with and for Christ. In one sense, this is the crowning perfection of love, for it is this that most intimately and most efficaciously joins us to Christ on the cross. In this sense, the desire for suffering is something which normally comes at the end of one's life, it is the proximate preparation for the perfect union with Christ in heaven. The positive desire to suffer, like the full perfection of love, is not a matter of immediate obligation; and to desire suffering without a proper grounding in humility would be presumptuous—because we would then hope to bear it by our *own* strength or courage, and such a hope would expose us to one of the worst dangers—spiritual pride.

Yet the desire to suffer with Christ and for Christ need not be looked upon as the special privilege of a few chosen souls who have a special vocation from God. We must never indeed try to force the pace, or try to get to perfection any faster than God wills. Yet at any one point, we must strive to be ready to give God whatever He asks of us. From the very beginning (from baptism or conversion after mortal sin) we must be *willing* to suffer—to suffer whatever is necessary to avoid mortal sin; this is the minimum demanded by sanctifying grace. The *desire* to suffer is not so much something different from this *willingness* to suffer; it is rather the more explicit and conscious formulation of the willingness. And we may encourage ourselves to develop this higher form of love—the desire to suffer—by remembering what St. Catherine says of purgatory: that the pains exceed anything we can imagine in this world, yet the soul plunges itself gladly into the flames and would plunge itself into a greater fire if it could thereby be cleansed more quickly.

From the desire to suffer we must go on to the desire to consecrate the whole of oneself, the whole of the race to the Sacral Heart. Such a consecration is really a ratification of what Christ has already done for us and in our name, on Calvary. Our action in making a consecration of ourselves (or of others, as far as we may legitimately do that) is not so much an action added to the work of Christ; it is rather our co-operation with Him by which He completes His own work, fulfils His own design; and our co-operation is necessary because His work involves our hearts or wills. He cannot consecrate us without our own consent. Christ is a vast force working throughout the world to the end that the whole being of each man and the whole human race be

sanctified by possessing the life of the Most Holy Trinity. When that life reaches its full development and vigour, we have no thought, aspiration, word or deed that proceeds merely from our human nature—everything comes from grace, from union with Christ's Heart. By virtue of what Christ has already done for us, we can now use the things of the natural order towards the complete consecration of ourselves to Christ. Of the things in the natural order, there are three which need particular attention, and to which particular attention can be paid at almost any moment of the day: our own *human nature*, the *material things* we need as animals, and *suffering* in the widest sense. We carry our human nature around with us wherever we go (even into the strictest cloister, for no wall can keep it out); we constantly need material things; and hardly an hour passes without some sort of suffering (sickness, pain, adversity, disappointment, temptation, trials, difficulties, mortification, penance).

These things (human nature, material things and suffering) can be used towards our total consecration and sanctification, only because they have already been radically consecrated by Christ. This radical consecration takes place in the Incarnation itself, where God takes to Himself all three; the consecration is carried a step further by the institution of the sacraments, in which human nature and material things become the actual means of grace (so that, e.g., baptism is invalid without water); carried a step further by the Mass, in which human nature is enabled to turn suffering towards the salvation of men. The Son of God consecrated human nature by taking it to Himself in personal union; material things by instituting the sacraments; suffering by His Passion.

We must now look at the means by which, in our daily lives, we do consecrate these three things (our human nature, our use of material things and our sufferings). For their consecration, we need the whole apparatus of the virtues and the gifts. But to avoid a too lengthy and involved discussion, we may look at the virtues which are most immediately called into play. We need first of all faith, hope and charity, the virtues which establish an immediate contact with God; of these three, charity is the chief because where it is, the other two must be; every act must be an act of charity, or commanded by charity (and it is such an act, provided it is accompanied by sanctifying grace and proceeds from a right motive); charity is especially that virtue which makes us eager to do the will of the Father in all things, that is, gives us the radical resemblance to Christ and communicates His power to us.

Besides the theological virtues, we need the spirit of poverty; that is, we must be willing at any moment to do without any particular material thing in order to remain lovers of God. We need chastity and its necessary accompaniments: temperance and mortification. Only by the spirit of poverty and by chastity, can we follow St. James' command to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. (James I.27.) Without them, our own natural desire for pleasure, our natural shrinking from pain will lead us into some misuse of our human nature and of material goods. We acquire the power to make a right use of the things of this world by baptism, which thus imposes on us the obligation to relive the poverty, chastity and obedience of Christ.

What is given to us by baptism is increased by the Mass. We are given divine life at baptism, by entering into Christ's death; Christ perfects that life within us by giving us the fuller share in His death which is the Mass. The more perfectly we are prepared for Mass, the fuller is the share we come to have in His death and in the power that goes with that death. And in thinking of this "preparation" for Mass, let us not fix our attention exclusively on the few moments we may spend in private prayer. The liturgical preparation is baptism and penance; it is by drawing out ever more and more fully the fruits of these sacraments that we prepare ourselves most effectively for Mass. That is, every act of faith, hope or charity, of temperance, of mortification, every act prompted by the love of chastity or by the spirit of poverty—every act of this kind is a preparation for Mass by virtue of the radical consecration that Christ made of us in His death and in our baptism. In proportion as our lives are motivated and guided by these virtues, we shall derive more fruit from the short time spent in prayer before Mass (and even if it is a half-hour, it is still a short time).

Even for the lay person, Mass should normally mean Communion; provided he is in the state of grace, Mass will normally mean some form of at least spiritual Communion. Mass looked at in this way is that by which:

we draw closest to Christ;  
Christ enters into us;  
we share in Christ's power over sin.

Hence devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Eucharist are closely connected; hence too He attached the great promise to the Eucharist. For the whole purpose of the Christian life is to make us one with Christ, and this is most immediately and most effectively done in the Eucharist. The great means then of sharing in Christ's power over sin, His power to destroy sin, to wipe out the decree that was written against us, to turn our past sins and the sins committed against us into the means of forgiving sin, the great means of sharing in this power is the Mass. The fervent hearing of Mass is the great act of devotion to the Sacred Heart.

### **OUR INCORPORATION INTO CHRIST**

From the notion of the loving authority of Christ, we can see more fully into the notion of incorporation into Christ. This incorporation is a continuous process which must be spread over the whole of one's life; it is also the basic process of sanctification. The first truth about this incorporation that we must study is that Christ is in us and we are in Christ. This mutual relation is established by love; it is perfected by growth in love.

### *Christ Acts on Us*

Christ is really in us, for He acts in us, on us, by us and through us. He acts in us and on us, justifying us from original sin and from personal sin, intensifying and widening His hold on us till we are wholly possessed by Him. Justification and sanctification are indeed our action, but they are primarily the action of Christ on us. He acts by us and through us; He confers a priesthood on the church as a whole—a priesthood in which all can share. All priesthood (all supernatural authority) is in Christ; He bestows it on others out of the greatness of His love, that is, out of the riches of His Heart. All the efficacy of the Christian priesthood radiates from His Heart. Moreover, He works powerfully within us to perfect this priesthood; for ordinarily the efficacy with which a Christian exercises his priesthood is in proportion to his love for Christ. It was in this way that St. Theresa of Avila and St. Therese of Lisieux, while remaining in their own countries, were powerful influences in the foreign mission field. The raising up of these great saints and the great good they accomplished for souls and the church is primarily the work of Christ, through whom all good is accomplished. (John I. 3.) In the same way, the good that any of us may do is done by Christ. One of the great efforts that must be made by the Christian who would truly love Christ is the effort to be a fit instrument in Christ's hands.

We have here a very positive and encouraging way of looking at the mortification which is a necessary part of any Christian life. True mortification, like everything else truly Christian, must be directed primarily to God, not to ourselves. Its basic motive is not self-love, nor even self-improvement. Its basic aim is not to strengthen the will or to prepare us for difficulties, but to clear away all the obstacles to the full, unhampered working of grace within us. The great end of mortification is that there should "die" within us whatever is opposed to divine love, and that there should be left within us only a human nature which is wholly sanctified because wholly conformed to the image of the Son. What the Christian must aim at is very different from stoic self-restraint or puritan self-denial, because mortification is the "putting to death" of everything that prevents Christ from taking full possession of us and exercising His power in us and through us.

### *We Act on Christ*

This second phase of our incorporation into Christ is, if anything, more mysterious than the first. It is already mysterious enough that Christ can act so completely, so "inwardly" on us without in the least interfering with our own free will. It is still more mysterious that we can act on God.

And yet of this tremendous fact, we are left in no doubt.

The great prototype here is Mary, His mother. Mary conceived God, was truly the mother of God, suckled God, clothed God, helped God. We can understand something of the great Christian joy that filled the people at the declaration of the divine maternity, for that was the formal declaration by the church of the intimate relations which God had set up between human

beings and Himself. One great result of the Incarnation was to make God, in a real sense, dependent on His creatures—the kind of shelter God was born in, lived in, how He was fed and clothed, these things depended on men. And that dependence remains in a real, if mystical way. We are constantly in contact with the human nature of men—the human nature which the Son of God assumed to Himself. And what we do to humanity, we do to the humanity of Christ: 'Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to Me.' (Matt. XXV. 40.) The world, says Christ, will be judged finally by its charity to Him—to Him, wherever He may be found.

This final judgment of the world by charity is no afterthought, no mere addition to the Christian scheme of things, but an integral part of the divine plan set up by the Incarnation. For the Incarnation is the vast, all-inclusive act of Divine Providence, of divine love. The whole process of human history is the gradual unfolding of this plan, the gradual drawing out of the effects of the great act by which God became man.

To see the full consequences of the Incarnation, we must see that not only has it made God dependent on our good actions, but also in a certain measure subject to our evil will. As Mary is the prototype of all those who do good to God, the executioners and torturers are the prototype of all those who do evil to God. The torturers wielded the scourges that really inflicted pain on God, for it was the Person who suffered; by the Incarnation man became able to hurt the impassible God; by the Incarnation man became able to kill the eternal God. It was God who suffered, it was God who died. Here is the most mysterious of the various powers which man possesses—the power to gladden, the power to hurt God Himself.

Think of the tender and pitiful way in which He speaks of His rejection by Jerusalem (Matt. XXIII.37.); He cannot forget for a moment that the city is obliged to accept Him and His teaching, He cannot forget for a moment the fate which His Father has decreed for its rejection of Him; yet He is thinking mainly, not of the slight against His power, but of the coldness, pride, selfishness that slights His compassionate love. Note the tone of His prophecy of the destruction of the city—He leaves to the Last Day the triumph of seeing His authority vindicated; in the meantime the thought that is uppermost in His mind is the pain of unrequited love.

To such a state has the Incarnation reduced God—the state in which His creatures could not only disobey Him but hurt Him, pain Him, wound His susceptibilities. How we should hold our breath at the very thought of being able to wound the Heart of the Son of God. How we should tremble at the thought that God placed Himself in the position where we, His miserable creatures, could give Him pain.

Let us put forth our very best effort to grasp this great mysterious truth: every act of disobedience, every sin, is not only an offence against the infinite majesty of God and an injury to our own spiritual life, but in the Passion caused pain and grief to the Sacred Heart of Christ. We can fairly easily blind ourselves to the claims of the infinite majesty of God, for it is so very remote from us; blind ourselves to the needs of our spiritual lives for they are so very mysterious to us. But it is not nearly so easy to blind ourselves to the claims of the one Heart which has

given us such tangible, immediate and overwhelming proofs of His love for us. The more we can fix our minds on the claims of that Heart on us, the less likely are we to offend it.

The more radiant and effective our love for that Heart, the more constantly shall we be led to the practice of all the other virtues.

We may put this part of the doctrine of the Incarnation in a concrete fashion by saying that God has now a human Heart, and has taken to Himself the needs of a human Heart. And every heart craves affection—to give affection and to receive it. God by giving Himself a human Heart has imposed on Himself new needs—particularly to love men and to be loved by men.

Undoubtedly, without the Incarnation, God would have loved men; but such a love would not have been felt as a need, because as God, He could need nothing, and whatever love He might choose to give would not in any way be distinct from His own divine substance; He could not desire anything to complete His own divine being, which is complete from all eternity. But as Man, He actually does experience a need to love, for a human heart has not its own perfection unless it loves, and unless it loves not only God but men.

What is still more marvellous is that, by becoming man, God has a new need to be loved by men—He has placed Himself in the position where the return of love is necessary for His happiness, and where the failure of men to return His love can cause Him great pain. According to St. Margaret Mary (whom we may safely take as one of the great guides to the true devotion to the Sacred Heart), Christ returned again and again to the pain His Heart has suffered by the fact that He receives so little return for His love. There is here a very mysterious truth (as is indicated in *Miserentissimus* § 17, 18); but the mystery need not blind us to the fact—a fact which Christ Himself declared in the great words: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to Me."

We may, perhaps, bring these truths home to ourselves a little more deeply by looking at the relations that hold between any two people who truly love each other.

They give each other presents; they send messages to each other; whatever the message be about, it opens and ends with some endearing terms. As long as the love is real, the value attached to such presents or messages is derived from the love itself; the presents will be esteemed and cherished even when they have little or no intrinsic value, little or no practical usefulness. And when one person loses the love, and continues to give presents (as a husband or wife sometimes does), the presents become empty and even painful, the endearing terms become a hollow mockery. To be addressed lovingly by one who, we know, no longer loves us, is one of the worst pains that love can endure.

Very much the same relations hold between Christ and ourselves. If we are fulfilling our duties, we are constantly making Him presents, presents which He deeply appreciates even though He could have them without us. As often as we pray, we address Him in endearing terms,



terms to which His Heart vibrates with a divine joy. But if our love has died, and if we have no desire to escape from the state of sin, think what bitter pain these endearing terms cause Him. Hypocritical prayer said in sin may be not only an outrage to the infinite majesty of God, but also a sword that pierces His Heart.

In such considerations we may find powerful motives for avoiding not only mortal sin, but everything that can offend His Heart—all venial sin, all tepidity, all spiritual sloth, every form of hypocrisy. It is indeed impossible to give full, earnest meaning to every word in our prayers; but we must *try*. We are hypocrites to some extent if, while saying: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we have no intention of fighting against our smaller vices. Even when we are working industriously in His service, we may be yielding to various forms of sloth—by slurring over the one great work of becoming perfect in love. This is the one work for which He created us, redeemed us, and enriched us with all the wonderful things of nature and of grace. The one gift He asks in return is our heart, the one work we are to carry on is the work of love; it is the lover who chooses the better part, a part which will never be taken away. (Luke X.42.) Whatever we do, whatever we offer, pleases Him in so far as it comes from love. Whatever cannot be done out of love for Him, we must sedulously avoid. Whatever we do, whether it be prolonged toil, or deep sleep, or the enjoyment of companionship, should be done because we hope it will please His Heart.

### *The Obstacles to Perfect Love*

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is thus a constant call for the complete, unqualified surrender of our hearts to Christ. He will never take possession of our hearts by violence, but only by loving admission. If we would love Christ fully, we must realize the things which hold us back from the perfection of divine love. There are in general two sets of such things: a) sin, venial or mortal; b) inclinations, attachments, habits which, while not sins in themselves, are incompatible with the full, free action of love within our souls.

We may take an extreme case as illustration. Suppose a drunkard of long standing has been converted and has gained a plenary indulgence; he is so perfect that if he died in that state he would be immediately granted the beatific vision. But he is not yet free from the habit of drunkenness, and if he continues to live instead of dying, the habit is bound to remain an obstacle and a danger. The perfection he has for the time being is somewhat precarious—because the bad habits have not been all eliminated. We all have some habits of this kind; we all have some degree of faulty self-love, the love which, according to an old saying, dies fifteen minutes after ourselves; until we reach full habitual perfection, these bad habits will continue to act as obstacles. And normally, habitual perfection is reached only immediately before death; as the Council of Trent teaches, it is normally impossible to avoid all imperfections for any length of time.

To love God with our *whole* heart and whole mind is not only to be in the state of grace, but to combat all these faulty inclinations—to strive for a complete victory over them.

These faulty inclinations are seated so deep in our human nature and are so much a part of ourselves that their appeal to our will or heart is both instinctive (i.e., they can appeal and appear attractive before the intellect is aware of them) and very *strong*. They are constantly influencing us in the very way we conceive even our duties; for they lie at the very *heart* of human conduct, they are part of the very apparatus by which human conduct shapes itself. So they form an obstacle more insidious and more formidable than any attraction outside ourselves, such as wealth, or pleasure; these outside things *do* attract (and so do form a possible hindrance to divine love), only because our inner inclinations approve of them and find a certain gratification in them.

This does not imply that human conduct is the result of blind forces; man *is* governed by free will, and in the supernatural state he is enlightened and strengthened by grace. But the exercise of free will is largely a matter of selecting from among the choices presented by our instinctive forces and acquired habits; the selection we actually make depends very much on the state of the forces themselves. "The qualities of one's character," says Aristotle, "lead one to pursue particular ends." There have been monks like Chaucer's who have lost all taste for the cloister and who have habituated themselves to looking on the cloister as a nuisance and a bore; to such a monk, gadding around and long absences from his monastery will seem an ideal life. He is free to change his opinion, free to believe that retirement and solitariness are the only true happiness; but whether he *wishes* to change depends very much on his present state of mind. In the same way, the Little Flower was free to walk out of her convent and become an atheist or a communist, but the habits of her mind (acquired and infused) would have made such a step repellent.

The habits of our minds vary considerably from time to time, from earlier to later age, from sickness to health. But at any one moment we shall have some mistaken attitude, or habit of mind, which, though not itself a sin, is almost certainly the result of sin and can be the cause of sin. It is in this way that we develop attitudes towards such central and basic things as the daily practice of charity, earnest sincerity in our prayers and the shunning of the occasions of sin. And it is almost certain that some of our undesirable habits have become so fixed or habitual that we do not notice them, as we fail to observe our table manners or the way we walk, unless some special circumstance calls it to our attention.

We can learn a good deal about these faulty attitudes by observing the sins they lead us into, and what they habitually make us neglect. The process of discovering these faulty attitudes is difficult; the process of combating them is much more difficult and is the work of a whole lifetime. Only the desire to give Christ the love He deserves will be strong enough to keep us at these difficult tasks.

We see here the importance of an endless war on deliberate venial sin. We may put the case thus:

- 1) To strive constantly against venial sin is to give Christ constant evidence of our good will; it is also to train our instincts continually in the work of looking at things in the right way. By fighting all sin, we are training our appetites, over an ever larger and larger area of the mind, to respond to the guidance of grace in the right way.
- 2) The more we fight sin, and the more we open our heart, the more lovingly will Christ take up His abode within us; the more He enters within us, the more will He assume control of the whole life of the heart. He will then Himself take charge of the work of our sanctification, and fill us with all the fullness of God. This is one aspect of the "passive purifications" of which St. John of the Cross is the great exponent. There is, he teaches, a certain part of the work of purifying the human heart, which cannot be done by man himself, no matter how great his co-operation with grace. And not only in the passive purifications properly so-called, but in the whole guidance of our lives, Christ in proportion to our generosity, takes an active part in motivating and guiding us.
- 3) The total surrender of the will or heart into the hands of Christ is *the* sure way of attacking our faulty inclinations, of constantly weakening them, of lessening their power to lead us into sin. Christ enters the heart that He may work there our complete transformation into Himself. However much we labour, sanctity remains primarily the work of Christ.
- 4) Our bad inclinations—especially the seven deadly ones—are not so much separate inclinations, distinct entities, but rather perversions (or the collective perversity) of tendencies which are not bad in themselves. St. Thomas puts it simply by saying that the passions are morally indifferent, neither good nor bad in themselves; the passions and natural appetites are however strongly inclined to certain kinds of natural goods—so strongly that the inclination easily carries us to sin.

We must then be on our guard against attempts to *kill* our passions, emotions or natural inclinations. The notion of *killing* them is derived from the doctrine of mortification (putting to death) which occurs so often in the New Testament. But St. Paul, who treats this doctrine of mortification most fully, always joins the two notions of dying and living. In Col. III.3 we have the paradox: "You have *died* and your *life* is hid with Christ in God." The dying is a condition on which something—of infinitely higher value—may live; we die to the flesh (i.e., to the merely natural life) that we may live to the spirit (to the supernatural life of grace).

Our tendencies—towards food, drink, pleasure, comfort, etc.,—need purifying, for in so far as they are unregenerate, they are the source of all the opposition that Christ meets within us. It is the plan of Christ to destroy this opposition completely and forever. He can do this in various ways; the most perfect is the Immaculate Conception, in which Our Lady's human nature is wholly purified from the first instant of her being. Normally Christ destroys the faultiness of

our inclinations only gradually, by the gradual extension of His power over the whole of our human nature.

5) Similarly we need to be circumspect in using the common phrase, "giving up one's will." Whatever a man does deliberately, must be that man's will; what we must aim at is not so much "giving up our own will" (though that phrase will be serviceable if we remember its correct meaning), but rather to make Christ's will *our* will, to will what He wills (for this is the essence of love).

If we earnestly strive to avoid *all* sin, what we desire is that Christ should have complete dominion over us. Since this is also Christ's will, He and we are here one, and the more we are one with Him, the more effectively does He operate within us. There is then a direct connection between avoiding all deliberate sin and overcoming the seven deadly tendencies; by avoiding sin, we leave Christ freer scope to attack the source in ourselves of all opposition to Him. (Hence the Christian life is one not only of progress, but of ever accelerating progress. Hence too, the further we advance, the more do we grow in humility, in the practical realization that sanctity is Christ's work, that we are, of ourselves, incapable of good.)

As long as we are human, we continue to offer *some* opposition to Christ, to the reign of Christ in our heart. But there is an immense difference between the person who deliberately persists in venial sin and him who resists all sin; in the latter, there is no *deliberate* opposition to Christ—Christ is then free to operate as He pleases, and lead the person on to more and more perfect love. For all sanctity is attained in and by the new Adam. Many tendencies in our old Adam need purifying and cleansing; they will be purified and cleansed in proportion as we are united by love to the perfect humanity of the new Adam; the purifying is brought about particularly through the highest form of union with Him—Holy Communion. Holy Communion and its proper accompaniments—spiritual communions during the day, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, trying to live by Christ's motives—these are the *means* by which Christ unites Himself to us, and by uniting His Humanity to ours, removes the stains of sin and sinful inclination from our fallen humanity.

6) The things we find around us can lead us into sin only because God has put into them a certain beauty or attractiveness. Whatever beauty or goodness they have is only a faint image or broken reflection of the infinite power of God to draw our hearts to Himself. The whole universe, from the undying splendour of the first angel to the frail beauty of the last butterfly, is a manifestation, an outward showing of that infinite beauty which is 'ever old and ever young'; ever old because it precedes all else, ever young because no passing of time can ever bring to it the tiniest flaw. While Eternal Beauty manifests itself in many ways, it has reserved a special manifestation for 'these latter days.' For the God who 'spoke to our fathers on many occasions and by many means in the past has now spoken to us through His Son, a Son who is the radiant splendour of the Father and the perfect means of expressing God's nature.' (Hebr. I,1-3.) The church institutes the Feast of the Epiphany to remind us that Christ Himself is the Epiphany, the grand manifestation of God, from God, shedding a great light on the world, showing us what God is, and what man

has become through God. In so far as we understand the glory, grandeur, beauty of God in this world, it is by the Incarnate Word. And what the Word came principally to teach us is the great love which dwells for us in the Heart of God.

But as long as we are in this world, there is always the danger that creatures may become the rivals of God for the love of our heart. What God makes is good, and, since we know so little of God, it's very goodness may draw our hearts away from God to God's creatures. We do need to be on our guard against the tendencies of our nature, because these tendencies help us to feel the attractiveness of created things, and so may blind us to the attractiveness of Him who made them. Comfort, pleasure, prestige, a woman's smile—all the things which draw a man's heart—these things would have no power to draw the heart of man if they did not enclose some particle of the infinite attraction of the eternal beauty of God. Of the most insidious temptation, of the most attractive object, we may say what Christ said of Pilate: "thou wouldst have no power over me if it were not given to thee from above." All sin implies an unlawful yielding to the fascination which created things exert on the human heart.

We might consider the tendencies of our nature as salesmen continually showing us the beautiful, attractive things of the world, and asking us to buy these things by bartering away some (or all) of the grace we have. As long as we are human, we cannot help hearing *some* of the patter of these salesmen; but even what we hear from them can be used to see more clearly and fully into the nature of that infinite beauty that made them all.

As it is through these appetites that sin can enter into the soul, so it is through the purgation and cleansing of these appetites that sin is gradually removed—by the gradual destruction of the source of sin. This purgation must take place in both our lower, animal nature and our higher, rational nature. Sins of lust are possible to us only because we are part animal; sins of heresy, calumny and pride are possible because like the angels we possess the great gift of intelligence. St. John reminds us that every part of the natural universe has its dangers for us, because every part appeals as a source of gratification to either our sensuous or our intellectual appetites. We must not love anything created for its own sake, because everything created fosters either the concupiscence of avarice (the appetite for having, possessing, owning) or the concupiscence of the flesh (the appetite for comfort, gratification, pleasure), or the pride of life (the appetite for having one's own way, of planning one's own actions and life). (Cf. 1 John II.16.) What all these appetites need is not destruction but purification; the full purification must be partly passive since the task is so difficult, and Christ remains always the primary artisan and designer of all true perfection. What we must try then to do is to leave the door of our heart open to Christ, so that when He does choose to come to work that purgation within us, He will be admitted at once and find in us no deliberate obstacle.

If we keep the *need* (the great need) for this purgation in mind, we shall avoid a fallacy that many have been deceived into by the devil and by their own human nature. We *might* be inclined to say: since created things are the reflection of the beauty of God, the more I taste and enjoy them, the more I shall be led to God who made them; since God made the universe for my

enjoyment and use, I should employ it fully for that purpose as long as I do not sin. There are many ways in which this snare and delusion arises for human beings. It occurs most frequently perhaps in the form: I may with impunity do whatever is not forbidden by God's law.

When a person has developed this attitude, it is doubtful if logical reasoning is going to make much impression on his mind—because something more than logic is necessary to perceive the flaw in the argument. The most effective argument is to appeal to the teaching and particularly to the example of Him who, in all these matters, is the way, the truth and the life, Him who teaches us all we need to know and strengthens us to do all we need to do. The greatest revelation of the beauty and goodness of God is the Incarnate Word; the chief teaching of the Incarnate Word on how to possess ourselves of the beauty and goodness of God is the cross. We can learn from Christ only in so far as we are willing to learn from the cross. In so far as we reject the cross, we reject Christ Himself and we reject the wisdom He is able to give us; we reject the greatest and most powerful means of learning, of loving, the infinite beauty of God.

In other words, there is *nothing* from which we cannot learn something about God; but there is *nothing* that can teach us aright without our willingness to see the cross as the *great lesson*. And the central point of the lesson of the cross is that Christ, for the love of God and man, rejected *all* that naturally appeals to human nature, even to the human nature of the good man—success, friends, comfort, life.

Our Lord's own teaching on this point is: (John XII. 32.) "I being lifted up will draw all things to myself," and St. John adds that He said this to signify what death He should die. Christ's great work (the salvation of souls, the establishment of His supreme power, the drawing of men's hearts to Himself), is brought to perfection only in the Passion. So it is only by the cross that we can hope to be saved (or save others), hope to submit rightly to Christ's power, learn from Him to give our heart fully to Him.

Those over whom Christ wishes to establish His supreme power—so that He possesses them wholly and directs them in all they do—these Christ brings to the love of the cross; He makes them ready to renounce everything, to take up their cross daily. He teaches them the way to lose everything that they may possess the Creator of everything, to seek no joy but in their Lord, to learn the "folly-wisdom" of the cross so that they may possess the "weakness-strength" of the cross—the weakness by which Christ allowed His enemies to do their very worst to Him, the strength by which also He overcame the world and attained supreme power. 'To those who are perishing the preaching of the cross is folly; to the Jews, Christ crucified is a scandal; to the gentiles, He is folly; but to all who have been called, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. God's foolishness is wiser than men; His weakness is stronger than men.' (I Cor. I. 18, 24.)

If we have even an inkling into the wisdom of the cross, we shall clearly see the reason for being constantly circumspect and reserved in all our use of our natural inclinations, in all our use of the good things which our Heavenly Father has given us: "Brethren, the time is short;

henceforth let those that have wives be as having them not, those that buy as possessing not, and those that use the world as not using it to the full. For the world as we see it is passing away." (1 Cor. VII. 29-31.)

Provided we are prudent, the more we mortify these inclinations—the less we yield to our desire for our comfort, our pleasure, our own way—the more we are carrying the cross of Christ, and thereby we are giving Him freer and freer rein over our heart.

We can give Christ complete power over ourselves, we can give our hearts entirely to Him, by a relatively simple program: avoid all deliberate sin, even the smallest; learn as rapidly as possible (i.e., as rapidly as Providence allows in the individual case) to seek no satisfaction that is merely natural, that is, satisfaction that does spring from the active desire to please Christ.

Christ purchased His kingdom by His blood, that is, by a perfect act of love for God and men. It was by love that He won power from God over the universe; it is by love that He seeks to obtain from us power over our own hearts. He does indeed demand obedience of us; but while in the natural course of events obedience would have been the work of justice, it becomes, in the supernatural realm, the work of love. "I will not call you servants, but I have called you friends." (John. XV.15.) For what He desires of us is not so much the merely efficient service of good workmen, but rather the eager attention, the forestalling thoughtfulness of lovers. His power is indeed limitless; He has the right to issue any command He pleases (in this differing from any human authority, for the authority of every other man is limited); He has the right to demand obedience, the right to reward and to punish. But He desires above all to draw obedience from man out of love. We *need* the virtue of obedience, we need the gift of fear; but charity is higher than either. It is primarily by charity that He would work and live within us. There is under God's present Providence no meritorious obedience, there is no increase in grace, without love. In so far as we neglect or refuse to love the Sacred Heart, we are hampering His kingdom within us, for He would reign within us primarily by love.

### ***Christ Removes the Obstacles***

In the sense just mentioned, Christ's power over us is limited in so far as our love for Him is limited. We can see here something of the central position which He Himself gave to meekness and humility in loving Him. When He called on us to be meek and humble, He attached a special value to these virtues because these two produce a special likeness to Him: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt. XI. 29.) He thus calls on us to practise these virtues perfectly, because by these two, we surrender in a specially efficacious way to His power and kingship. For these two guard us against the evils of anger and pride—the two forces which so easily upset the right order in man. Unlawful anger is the sample of all the disturbance caused in us by our animal nature; pride, the sample of disorder caused by our intellectual or rational nature. By these two we lose power over ourselves, and so reject the kingship of Christ

over us. By meekness and humility, we admit Christ's rule over our whole nature, animal and rational.

There is thus a close parallel between Christ's exhortation to meekness and humility and His promise to the disciples that, in spite of persecution, they would win the final triumph: "In your patience, you shall possess your souls." (Luke XXI. 19.) The patience He speaks of here (the Greek word means literally "long awaiting") is closely allied to the meekness and humility which He counsels as the great way of imitating Him. What He promises here is that, by the practice of patience we enter into possession of our own souls. His phrase *could* mean, "You shall possess true life in the world to come—even though men put you to death here"; but in its context, the phrase has a fuller meaning: you shall possess that power over yourselves which comes from submitting to My power over you.

We may return for a moment to one of the important meanings of the word "heart." The heart is that by which man has power over himself, that indivisible responsibility that every adult carries before God. The heart is consequently that by which man can surrender himself to God, and allow God power over him—surrendering that supreme inner power which no one, not even God, can take from him against his will—"ubi trahor, amore trahor" (when I am drawn, it is not compulsion, it is love that draws me). So, in order that Christ have complete power over us, it is necessary that we submit ourselves entirely to Him; and this we do when we give Him that part of our inner self which He will not take from us till it is freely given; in this world He will not draw us to Himself except by love. The obstacles in the way of perfect love are the undesirable forms of self-love—sin and imperfection. He who would love God must try to hate everything in himself which prevents him from being 'perfect as his Heavenly Father is perfect.' (Matt. V. 48.) 'If any man come to Christ, and hate not everything, even his very life, he cannot be a true disciple.' (Luke XIV. 26.) There are many reasons for hating (as distinct from regretting) sin; one of the strongest is that sin and sinful inclination lessen our power over our own *self*, over our inner world of appetite and inclination, and thus trammel us in giving ourselves wholly to Christ. Anger and pride are general examples (as they are often in practice the concrete cases) of loss of power over oneself. Christ asks meekness and humility in a special way because anger and pride offer Him a special opposition within us. 'It is especially the lowly of heart that He guides in holiness, the meek to whom He teaches His ways.' (Ps. XXIV.9.) Meekness is thus not only a particular virtue but one of those general virtues by which we can come to learn ever more and more fully the ways of the Lord, of Christ, and learn to submit ourselves more and more effectively to Him.

In the passage mentioned above (Luke XXI. 19.) where Christ foretells the persecutions which lie ahead for His disciples, we find little mention of the one emotion which is usually considered as robbing us of our self-control—fear. But in any juncture of the Christian life, fear is a form of pride, for it supposes, not only that the strength available is insufficient for the danger to be met, but also that it is by *our* strength that we are to meet the danger. True humility is a total reliance on God, and excludes all deliberate fear, since God's promises are without repentance. (Roms. XI. 29.) To be truly humble is to unite the completest, most unhesitating



distrust of oneself with the profoundest, most unshakable confidence in God. The meekness which is a necessary consequence of true humility implies no hesitancy or timidity, it implies rather the readiness to meet the most frightful enemies where such opposition is required by duty. It is impossible to be truly humble without the virtue and the gift of fortitude. Meekness is thus a sort of meeting ground for humility and fortitude; it is also a centre from which both strength and recognition of weakness may radiate over the whole character as either is needed. We may here avoid the common mistake of merely pitting one virtue against one vice, the mistake of imagining the whole Christian life to be a set of duels between individual virtues and vices, with pride and humility fighting in one part of the field of spiritual combat, love and hatred in another, and so on. The Christian life is a much more organic unity than such an image would suggest. The virtues and the vices are not merely paired off against each other, for the influence of a virtue does not work in the same way as that of a vice. There is this great difference between the virtues and the vices that any one virtue helps the other virtues to grow, but any one vice tends to exclude, and even to kill, other vices—as drunkenness kills ambition. Humility thus offers a certain opposition to all the vices, and not to pride only; meekness is a *radical* perfection that frees the action of the other virtues. For charity is not only the queen of the virtues, but their mother as well, and they resemble their mother. Charity, by its very nature, is opposed to evil of every sort and degree; meekness is, in its way (if the mechanical metaphor may be allowed), a general lubricant which enables the apparatus of the virtues as a whole to function smoothly and readily. For example, meekness is a necessary condition for combining what we all need to combine—adaptability of mind and disposition with inflexibility of purpose. We must be all things to all men. Meekness can prepare us for the tangled situations which are bound to come into every Christian life, as when work with non-Catholics sometimes requires us to come to the defence of the church and sometimes requires us to remain silent, or the active ministry requires us to combine the coldness of chastity with the warmth of true love, or the discharge of authority requires us to combine the tenderness of charity with an exact appraisal of other people's characters. It is not meekness alone that is called on to help us in these difficult situations, but without the suppleness of mind and disposition that meekness gives, we shall suffer some degree of spiritual arthritis. Unless we are ready, by meekness, for each new situation and difficulty as it arises, we shall not have the desirable promptness and spiritual fitness that enable Christ to be fully the king of our hearts. He seeks to reign within us even more than to rule over us.

We may, for clearness' sake, distinguish between the two phases of Christ's power over us: His power to command from the outside, His power to act in a salutary manner within our hearts. In the first phase, His power is unlimited, since "all power is given to Him." But in the second, His power is limited until charity is made perfect. He does not consult us about the orders He issues through His human representatives or through the precepts of His new law. But He will not act *within* us except by our free consent. Thus even the baby at baptism gives consent through the sponsors, and is bound to renew this consent when he is able. It is hard to describe this mystery in human language; but we might put it this way: God's great plan to make love the chief force in the mutual relations between God and man involves this special limitation that

love, to be love, must be freely given, it cannot be forced. The kingdom of Christ's love is, by its very nature, something which man can, for a time, reject. So, while the Heart of Christ is full of all divine riches, and while He has but one desire—to give these riches away—still Christ is not fully able to give until we are fully willing to receive.

### ***We Remove the Obstacles***

Free will is the power by which we shape our deliberate conduct, choosing the object by which we hope to attain our supreme gratification. While certain things gratify our bodies and other things gratify our intellects (some things appealing to the animal in us, others to the spiritual element in us), still all gratification is at root a gratification of the will—of the self, of our power to shape our own conduct. Even the most sensual or bestial gratification in man is the gratification of a rational being, and so, when deliberate, is only analogically similar to the gratifications of the animals. In the same way, the simplest denial of bodily gratification (not smoking, not eating candy) can be a truly rational act, and so may proceed, not only from the natural force of intellect and will, but from the supernatural force of divine love. So any kind of deliberate act, even the simplest, may be an accepting or a rejecting of the kingdom of Christ.

The power of free will is a power that must be constantly brought into use. Even indeliberate acts can come under the control of free will (by habitual or virtual intention which perseveres through many actions).

The constant exercise of free will places man in a position of terrifying responsibility; if we are not actually terrified by it, that is due not so much to strength of courage as to blindness of intellect. Every time a man makes a fully deliberate choice, he recognizes a supreme lawgiver, a final arbiter of what human conduct should be. In so far as his choice is in conformity with the divine will, he acknowledges God as the supreme lawgiver; in so far as what he chooses conflicts with the divine will, he sets himself up as the final arbiter. The history of the human race, as made known to us by divine wisdom, opens with an account of the first deliberate choice of man between good and evil. We miss the point of the story if we think of Adam as merely infringing a regulation made in what appears to be a somewhat arbitrary manner by God. What Adam declared in effect by his sin was that he, not God, had the right to decide what use he was to make of his mind and body. By contrast, the new Adam comes into the world to open a new chapter of human history, with the declaration of His readiness to devote Himself, body and soul, to doing God's will. On entering the world, He declares: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, O God; but a body Thou hast prepared for me: I come to do Thy will." (Ps. XXXIX. 6; Hebr. X. 5.) The deliberate sin of Adam is the prototype, as in a sense it is the cause, of every human violation of the divine law; the deliberate obedience of Christ to the divine will is the prototype, as it is the true cause, of all recognition of the kingdom of God, of Christ as king. Whether we are aware of it or not, every deliberate act of the will considers our own self either as supreme ruler, or as subject to God; every deliberate choice is a choice between God and ourselves.

We may consider any fully voluntary action from three points of view—it is an act of love, an act of sacrifice, an act of either submission or pride.

### *Love*

Every deliberate use of the will is an act of love—either of the infinite, supreme good which is God, or of the limited, lower good which is our own self. Not every act performed in the state of mortal sin is itself a mortal sin, but it is incapable of being directed meritoriously towards the infinite good. In the state of grace, every act *should* be an act of love for God. In the prayer to Christ the King, we pray that through our poor actions "every heart may recognize the kingship of Christ." The word "heart" is not here fortuitous; for without love (which is typified by "heart"), the kingship of Christ cannot be properly recognized. The recognition which Christ desires is no mere act of the cold, speculative reason, but a practical norm of conduct. And without courage (also typified by "heart"), we cannot persevere in recognizing His kingdom and in overcoming the difficulties we are bound to meet. Every act which properly recognizes Christ as king, recognizes Him as king of our heart; every such act is an act of love.

### *Sacrifice*

Secondly, every deliberate choice is an act of sacrifice; it is the selection of some one good from among all the possible goods we might have or desire at the moment; the selection of one is the rejection of all the others. In a very real sense, every deliberate choice is an act of universal abandonment, renunciation, sacrifice. To embrace any one thing is to spurn all the other things we might have at that moment. In this sense, sacrifice is inherent in the very notion of deliberate action; to take one's enjoyment in an armchair cuts one off from the enjoyment of swimming or of skiing. Thus, not only the Trappist monk pronouncing his vows, but the fornicator adhering to a woman, is performing an act of universal abandonment—though in different senses and with different results. In one way, the mortal sin is a more complete renunciation, more final, than the vows of religion; for sin, especially mortal sin, has something irrevocable about it—the sinner has no power whatever by himself to change the condition of soul which he has brought about by himself. And any mortal sin is a complete renunciation of all the goods which man might hope to enjoy in eternity; it is in its own way an act of complete abandonment, sacrificing everything else for the sake of the one thing in which a man hopes to find his gratification.

### *Pride or Submission*

Every deliberate act is an act of submission to the supreme lawgiver, or else an act of pride by which we attempt to make ourselves (our own self) the lawgiver. The more clearly we recognize the nature of this choice, the more firmly shall we be urged to submit our will to the eternal will, to submit our heart to the Heart of Christ. From one point of view, heaven and hell are the full revelation of what it means to submit to, or to reject, the divine will.

Since every act of choice involves so much, since it implies such vast responsibility and such vast consequences, it is most necessary that, in every choice, we should understand as fully as possible just what we are choosing, and just what we are losing or sacrificing. For every choice means that we gain something, and that we lose something. Now one of the great teachings of divine wisdom is that, if we choose God for our inheritance, we do not in the long run sacrifice anything, we really lose no gratification, we merely postpone it; for whatever true gratification can be found in any way in any creature is made possible by God, and must be found, in a more perfect manner, in God who is the only ultimate source of every kind of good. God Himself is our reward even for the sacrifice of material things—we shall receive a hundred fold, not by receiving a hundred of the petty things we have rejected for His sake, but by receiving Him; He is worth them a hundred times, and a hundred million times. Those who attain the Beatific Vision gain all things: 'the Lord Himself is the inheritance which comes to me' (Ps. XV. 5.); "*all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*" (1 Cor. III. 23.)

But to gain God ultimately, and to gain all things along with Him, we need to sacrifice everything except God in this world—we must be willing to part with anything rather than offend Him: "unless a man renounce *all* he possesses, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke XIV.33.) And we should not restrict our efforts merely to avoiding offence against God. He has been so generous with us that we should be willing to sacrifice anything rather than miss an opportunity to please Him. Justice by itself would require that we obey God; love requires that we should also do many things we are not strictly bound to do. By such generous efforts, we gain Him, and His peace, even in this world. Thus we learn gradually to be completely under the guidance of grace, completely at Christ's disposal; we shed our natural inclinations that Christ's grace may possess us wholly; we die to the biddings of our mere human nature that we may live and move by a truly divine life: "he who will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. XVI. 25.)

So, to gain God ultimately, we must strive in this world to love God alone for His own sake. The will or heart of man is that power by which, through charity, man *loves* God above all things, *submits* to God in all things, *sacrifices* everything for God's sake. In *one* human Heart, this love, this submission, this sacrifice is perfect, so perfect that that Heart communicates its perfection to all the other human hearts that are willing to receive from Him. By the Incarnation, the divinity takes such radical, such complete possession of the Heart of Christ that that Heart can never love or wish for anything but what is loved and wished for by God. Christ wishes similarly to possess our will, to direct it constantly, to make it perfect in love, submission and sacrifice.

It is this dominion over our hearts that is principally meant by the kingship of Christ, the reign of Christ's love. For He wishes to exercise His power, not only by issuing orders, but by being "in us", by having us "in Him", by "dwelling in our hearts by grace and faith". So we pray that all "hearts may recognize His kingship"—recognize His power by love, submission and sacrifice. For the highest prerogative we possess in the natural order is our power of self-determination; and it is this highest thing which Christ wishes to win from us by love. He wishes to "possess" us—in a higher and infinitely better sense than a devil can "possess" us. He desires possession of our heart, for this is what gives Him control of the whole of our being. "Son, give me thy heart, and let thy eyes keep my ways." (Proverbs, XXIII. 26.) (Antiphon of the Feast of the Sacred Heart.) If we give Him our heart, He will see to it that we keep His ways. To give Him our heart is to give Him that by which we control ourselves. To give Him our heart is necessarily a free act, an act of love. Christ gives us freedom that we may freely choose Christ, and choose the way to perfect freedom and perfect love which He has pointed out to us—the way of submission and of sacrifice. And so our free choice of Christ involves the choice of suffering, submission and death—the death of self-will, of self-love.

Our choice of the man-God, of His sufferings, of His sacrifice and death, this choice is always an act of faith; for the full enjoyment of God is postponed till we see Him face to face, and know Him as He really is. The perfect reward of charity is postponed till charity is perfect—perfectly stable, indestructible.

When our love expresses itself in submission and in sacrifice, we spread the kingdom of Christ, first in ourselves, then in others; we join with the Father in glorifying the humble, obedient man Christ, we join with the Father in giving Christ the kingdom which is His.

In some mysterious way the Passion of Christ goes on to the end of time: "Whatsoever you do to the least of My brethren, you do it to Me." In something of the same mysterious way, the exaltation of Christ by the Father goes on to the end of time; thus we have the privilege of sharing in Christ's sufferings, and also in His triumph. And this is true, not only in the sense that Christ goes on enabling us to triumph, but also in the more wonderful sense that we enable Christ to triumph. For He has called us to an *active* share in His kingdom, a share by which we can help Him triumph in the hearts of men. We exercise this share in many ways, but especially in the way by which Christ brought about His own triumph—by sacrifice, by suffering and death. 'Our poor actions can work to the end that the reign of His peace may be established throughout the world.' (Prayer to Christ the King.) Whoever has sinned (and we have all sinned), has had some share in degrading, in humiliating Christ in His Passion. God chooses, gratuitously and generously, to offer us now an opportunity to exalt and glorify Christ. And as we degraded Christ by disobedience, by pride, by self-love, so we help to exalt Him by a love of God that shows itself in humble, generous submission.

The very nature of Christ's love for us is such that He must desire us to reciprocate it ever more and more. That is, He must always desire to increase the *actual exercise* of His power over us. He seeks to extend His reign over us by extending our love for Him. In His dealings with

individuals, with societies, and with the church, His love and His power are inextricably bound together; they are exercised at the same time in every place except in hell. And so, to desire the extension of His power is to desire to love Him more intensely and to lead others to a more devoted love. The great work of accepting Christ as king is the same as spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Christ, we might say in our human language, made one supreme effort to win this dominion over our hearts—in His Passion. But He was not content with dying for us, He decreed that His supreme sacrifice should last to the end of time; so He instituted the Mass and the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the perpetuation of Christ on earth, and especially the perpetuation of the redeeming action of Christ on Calvary. In that sacrifice, Christ performed the highest action of the man-God; for the whole of His nature, and especially the whole of His will was submitted to and incorporated into the divine will. From this sublime act of Christ comes the sanctifying—the elevating, consecrating and guiding—of every other human will. And so the Eucharist is the perpetuation of Christ's action on us and in us—the actual means by which we consecrate that which is most truly our own—our will, our self,—and devote it entirely to doing the divine will. We are given autonomy that we may autonomously, freely, completely surrender our will to the divine will, that is, that we may love the Sacred Heart with a love which is as worthy of Him as we can make it.

### *The Power of the Sacraments*

We see from the foregoing something of the vast range and efficacy of the sacramental system which Christ set up. The sacraments as a system are the means by which He claims and exercises jurisdiction over the material part of the universe—the lowest part indeed, but the part which so often draws men's hearts away from Him. It was from the material universe that He fashioned to Himself a body, blood, and heart by which He might save the world. Wherever baptism is being administered, wherever the holy oils are anointing the priest or the dying, Christ is there asserting, using His power over the material universe. Wherever there is chastity, or temperance, or poverty, there Christ is asserting His kingship over the material world, and turning it now, as formerly He turned the cross and nails, to the defeat of the kingdom of Satan and to the salvation of souls. And of all this sacramental system, the crowning glory is the sacrament of His love, the love-feast of His body and blood. Through this closest of communions, He gives us Himself and consequently His power.

We should be profoundly grateful to the king of our hearts who has so enriched us. He first accepts us as His subjects in baptism, by which we not only renounce His enemies and pledge our allegiance, but receive the new marvellous vigour of sanctifying grace and its accompanying faculties of faith, hope and charity. That is, at the very beginning, we receive privileges and powers which raise us above the whole natural creation and enable us to do what would be impossible to the highest angel by himself. For we become able to love God with a

love which is of the same nature as His own. No wonder the devils are hideously jealous of us, and would do anything to destroy our grace, since we, who are naturally so inferior to them, are supernaturally so much greater. No wonder too that Paul strains his language to find some way of describing what God has done to us: 'I pray that God may grant you to know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, displayed in the working of the might of His strength' (Eph. I. 17.)

And what Christ begins in baptism He nourishes by the other sacraments. Confirmation is especially the sacrament of His power; He calls us to confirmation that we may share His power over demons, over men, over material things, that neither demons nor men or material things may have over our hearts any influence that is in the least contrary to the aspirations of His Heart, and that one day we may say, like Him, "I have overcome the world." (John XVI. 33.) And who could fathom the power of His compassion in the sacrament of penance, where Christ, the priest, and the penitent work together to destroy the evil which, but for the kindness of Christ, would be forever indestructible. By these sacraments, He enables us to go on to complete the work of His own Passion, by hearing Mass and receiving Holy Communion. By every Mass worthily heard, by every Communion worthily received, we enter into Christ's power over sin, with Him we reach out to the ends of the earth, to atone, to sanctify, to give to other men, as far as they are willing to receive, the unsearchable riches of the power of Christ.

If we look on the kingdom as it is conceived in the plan of Divine Providence, we see it as a gigantic plan of eternal wisdom, power and love, to set up love as the chief relation between man and God, a plan to make Divine Love and Divine Providence coterminous, to draw all things to God by love. The first great step towards this great end is the Incarnation, which is God's supreme act of love for His creation. The next step is the Passion—the supreme act of love for all men. The third great step is the institution of the Eucharist, which is the permanent memorial of the Passion. The Incarnation and the Passion become, through the Eucharist, the possession of all men, and all are invited into the kingdom of love. For all time, the Eucharist will stand as the consummation of love, the perfect surrender of Christ to us, the perfect surrender of ourselves to Christ. Only substantial love—love which is also infinite power and infinite wisdom—could have designed anything so wonderful as the Eucharist. This supreme sacrament could come only from a Heart of infinite love.

The divine plan which is revealed to us through the Sacred Heart is a plan which does not in any way attenuate the infinite rights of God, or the obligation of man to fear and obey God. At the same time, God wishes to draw all things to Himself primarily by love; His love evolves a plan to transcend fear, and to transfigure obedience into the higher perfection of love. Whatever obligations He lays on us, whatever he allows to happen to us—all these are means by which He wishes to bring us to the kingdom where love reigns supreme and reigns for ever.

Every great painting has a centre of interest; its masses and lines are arranged in such a way that, wherever we look, our eye is brought, gently but inevitably, to that centre. Wherever we turn in looking at the world with the eye of faith, we find our attention coming back always to

the one central thought—that the one thing that God manifests in all He does is love, the one thing He asks from us is love. Every act of Divine Providence, if understood in the right way, is an act of love for us. All that God does is a work of superabundant, infinitely tender and compassionate love. All that we do must be an effort to achieve a love that is worthy of the God who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us, that He might redeem us, sanctify us, and admit us to the glorious kingdom of His power over sin, over suffering and over death. The end will come when Christ has subdued all His enemies for ever; in the eternal peace of His kingdom, we shall find our perfect happiness in eternal love.