

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

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INTRODUCTORY

There are many reasons why we should try to understand and practise devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is one of the most widespread of the devotions of a Church world-wide, in its extension. There is hardly a Catholic to whom the words "Sacred Heart," are not full of meaning. Moreover, it is remarkable in its origin, for the devotion as it exists today has as its author Christ our Lord Himself. He revealed it to St. Margaret Mary, (See "The Life of St. Margaret Mary," by the same author A.C.T.S., 2d.), and it was by His express wish that she and her helpers propagated it. Furthermore, while there are many approved devotions which the faithful may adopt or not, as they wish, because none of these devotions is necessary, though they are helpful for different persons and in different circumstances, the devotion to the Sacred Heart is so closely related to the central doctrine of Christianity, the Incarnation, and expresses so exactly the spirit which should animate all true Christians, that it may be looked upon as a necessary part of our religion, and not a thing of choice.

Again, it will hardly be an exaggeration to say that no devotion has produced such striking fruits in souls and in the life of the Church. The following pages are meant to help the reader to understand the devotion better, the foundations on which it rests, the spirit which animates it, the demands it makes on us, and the benefits we may expect from it.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE DEVOTION

1. The Love of Our Lord.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart may be said to be in general the devotion of the love of Jesus Christ. Our Lord loves us with a twofold love - a divine love which had no beginning, and a human love which began in time. Let us consider these in turn.

From all eternity God loved us. That is something which straightway surpasses our powers of comprehension. Our mind is staggered when we try to go back and grasp the meaning of eternity. We feel ourselves helpless as a butterfly fluttering against the windowpane. We look around at our friends and relatives and calculate how brief has been the time for which we have enjoyed their affection. But for endless ages before they or we existed God had us in His thought and in His love. "The King of ages, immortal and invisible," wonderful in His beauty, His goodness, and His power, fixed His affections upon us, and chose us out of countless possible beings to be His children, sharers of His riches. This love of God was His free gift. And what a gift it was! Like Himself, it was infinite. Let us think of those that love us most on this earth. Does God love us as much as that?

Yes, and much more. Let us pass beyond the bounds of reality and picture love in its most perfect form. We shall weary ourselves in our efforts to represent to ourselves God's love in its immensity, and yet we shall fall immeasurably short of the reality. And it is a real love tender, thoughtful, wise, enduring, such as we could never find in this world. God's love is perfect love.

When the time which, in His wisdom, He chose was come, He drew us out of nothing, giving us that gift of existence which only He could give. Every instant since we were created the same divine power has been exercised for the continuance of that gift. God does not forget us - could not forget us. We could not exist

for an instant if He were not thinking of us and loving us. Every moment God's love is around us, enfolding us more closely than the air we breathe.

But God knew that we should find it hard to realise His wonderful love for us. He knew that we should be inclined to think of Him as dwelling far away from us "in unapproachable light." So He determined, in order to convince us of the reality of His love, to bridge the gulf which separated Him and us, to unite in one Person the nature of the Creator and of the creature, and to offer us the love of a human heart. We know the story of how the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity laid aside the glory of heaven and crept in among us as a little baby, a stranger in His own world. He might, of course, have had all the treasures earth could produce if He wished, but He was not attracted by any of these. It was His love for us alone which brought Him on earth.

He grew up in weakness and poverty, in humiliation and obedience, in labour and weariness; He endured pain and sorrow, loneliness and ingratitude, unkindness and injustice; He was hungry and thirsty, tired and disappointed; He was even depressed and afraid. He tasted of everything we should find hard in the course of our pilgrimage. And all the time He was the eternal God, striving to prove His love for us.

The Gospel story shows what a tender heart He had. He loved little children. He defended the oppressed, and He was the friend of those who were despised. He joined in the simple festivities of the poor. He sympathised and wept with those in sorrow. He fed the hungry and gave health and strength to the sick. He was gentle with the wayward, and forgiving towards the worst sinners. His hard words were reserved for those who would make the approach to Him difficult. And we must remember that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and for ever."

He came on earth to reveal His love, but for another reason, too. Souls which He had created and were precious to Him were in danger of being stolen from Him, and He came to buy them back. He paid an enormous price, but paid it gladly, for, as He said himself, "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also." The Cross and the wounded figure upon it are a constant reminder of the price He paid for our souls, and of the love which made Him sacrifice Himself like this. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold and silver... but with the precious blood of Christ."

He died for us. "Greater love than this no man hath." But the love of Christ, God and Man, was not yet exhausted. Though He died for us, He would still stay with us in His human nature throughout all time, in greater obscurity even than when He was hidden at Nazareth, to be a companion to us in our exile and a support in the trials of life. So that wherever we go we find Him hidden indeed, but really present; the same God who loved us from all eternity, and came down from heaven seeking us, with the same body which suffered for us, the same heart which beat for us, and the same infinite love poured out upon us. And - what even with knowledge of God's infinite love and power we should not have dreamed of hoping for - He gives us His own body to be our food and the blood of His Sacred Heart to drink.

The story of His love does not end even here. Jesus Christ took our nature that He might share His with us. Even on the earth we are raised by sanctifying grace above our natural condition, and live a divine life, while Christ Our Lord is "preparing a place for us" in His Father's house, where by right of our supernatural likeness to Him we shall take our place in God's own home and enjoy its splendour and beauty, its joy and gladness, without fear of loss or shadow of care, for ever.

2. The Ingratitude of Men

Wonderful beyond all our powers of comprehension is the story of Our Lord's love for us. What are the feelings of men towards Him in return? We should expect that all hearts would be captured by such love, and that the powers of gratitude of the human heart would be strained to the utmost in order to meet the debt such love imposed. Is it so? There are many, indeed, who love Jesus Christ, and some who love Him

very generously; but there are vast numbers who ignore Him, who neglect Him, who distrust Him, and who outrage Him. Even among those who would naturally be counted His friends He does not receive the love and gratitude which all His efforts have deserved to win. He really loves; therefore He wants love in return. He has loved without measure; He is proportionately disappointed when those He loves prove indifferent.

One of the keenest sufferings we know is that caused by ingratitude. The poets voice the feelings of all when they call it sharper than serpent's tooth, ruder than the winter's wind. If only a trifling service has been done another, and it is taken as a matter of course or ignored altogether, we are hurt. If we have put ourselves out for another's sake and our unselfishness is not appreciated, we consider a wrong has been done us. And if one has made heavy sacrifices for the good of another, and has devoted pains and care and love to another's interests, and no return of gratitude is made, there is a wound caused which nothing can heal. Where shall we find love like that of Jesus Christ, love so unchanging, so tender, so generous? If a mere man had done for us the hundredth part of what Christ has done, we should blush even to seem ungrateful. But just because the Man who loves us is God, the supreme Lord of all, and just because He has loved us more unselfishly than any other has ever loved, we think it no shame to neglect Him.

Our Lord had a human heart like ours, only more sensitive, because more perfect. Therefore, He was hurt by ingratitude, and the pain He felt was all the greater because of the greater sensitiveness of His nature and the greater intensity of His love. This is betrayed by His words in the Gospels. "Were not ten made clean?" He asked when He had granted the unhopd-for boon of cure of leprosy to ten men, and only one (and he was a stranger, Our Lord noted) came back with a word of thanks. "You shall all leave Me alone," He said sadly to the Apostle's in His hour of distress. He wanted the consolation of their association with Him in His prayer in Gethsemane, and was disappointed when He found them asleep. "Could you not watch one hour with Me?"

Peter swore he never knew his Master, and Jesus turned and looked at him, and the pain in that glance pierced Peter's heart. There was reproach in His words to Philip: "So long a time have I been with you, and you have not known Me." With how much more reason the words might be addressed to us! He drew attention to the selfishness of those who followed Him "because they got plenty to eat" through His miraculous multiplication of the loaves. He was pained because the Apostles were slow of heart to believe. He felt keenly, and drew attention to, the treachery of Judas, betraying Him with a kiss. When He saw many leaving Him at the moment He was promising them His greatest gift, He turned sadly to the twelve with the words: "Will you, too, go away?" He wished to be held in remembrance, and said: "Do this in commemoration of Me." He wept over Jerusalem at the thought of all His overtures rejected. When He cried, "I thirst," on the Cross, He was chiefly expressing the unsatisfied desires of His heart. And when He hung dead on that same Cross, the wound in His side dripping blood and water was a last eloquent witness to His unrequited love.

II. THE SACRED HEART

In the pierced heart of Our Lord we have, therefore, a natural symbol of His love and of the pain our ingratitude has inflicted upon Him. Is it not fitting, then, that His heart should receive special honour?

All Our Lord's sacred humanity is adorable because it is the humanity of God. We adore His body, His blood, and His soul because, though created things, they have been taken into a personal union with Himself by the Son of God. Being His, they are divine, and deserve divine honour. The human heart of Christ is, therefore, the heart of God, and shares in the worship due to the whole of the sacred humanity - the worship due to God.

But there are reasons why we should mark out the heart for special honour. The heart is universally taken to represent the person, from the point of view of his inner life his sentiments, his emotions, his principles.

In this sense we speak of the heart as we speak of the whole man; we attribute to the heart the qualities of the whole man. It is natural, therefore, that we should do the same in the case of Our Lord, and in honouring His heart honour His Person; in speaking of the qualities of His heart speak of His whole character. Our Lord Himself does this. He says He is "meek and humble of heart." He reminds us that a man's words and actions reveal the state of his heart (Luke vi., 45), and that God knows our hearts (Luke xvi., 15). A man may be blameless outwardly and yet have sinned "in his heart" (Matt. v.. 28).

But in particular the heart stands for affections and emotions - for love. The heart is the universal symbol of love, and in all languages the words heart and love are interchangeable. In the Old Testament the gift God asks is the heart "My son, give Me thy heart (Prov. xxiii., 26). Our Lord says we should love God "with our whole heart," and points out that a man's heart will be where what he treasures is. The heart of Jesus, therefore, means for us the love with which He has loved us, and in honouring His heart we honour the Person of Christ Himself, and wish in particular to show our appreciation for the great gift of His love.

The object, then, of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is His human heart as representing His love, or the love as represented by His heart. The object, therefore, is twofold, containing the thing symbolised and the symbol, the love of the heart and the heart that loves. But, as we have explained, the heart is not a mere symbol, like a lifeless relic, or a flag, in defence of which, nevertheless, soldiers will give their lives; it is a living member of Christ's sacred humanity. It is the heart which grew with His growth from infancy to manhood; the heart which beat faster with joy, and was contracted with sorrow; the heart which forced His blood through the pores of His skin in His agony at Gethsemane, which beat ever more slowly during the hours on the Cross and finally faltered and stopped in death; the heart which was opened by the spear of the soldier, which lay dead in the tomb, and was revived and glorified on the morning of the Resurrection; the heart which still heats with love today, as it did during His life on earth.

We single out the Sacred Heart, then, for special worship and honour because it very naturally stands for the Person of Christ our Lord, and is a most suitable reminder of the immense love, divine and human, which He pours out on us. And while representing so vividly that love for us, it at the same time brings forcibly before us the poor return we make to so loving a heart.

III. THE ORIGIN OF THE DEVOTION

From what has been set down so far it will be clear that devotion to the Sacred Heart in its fundamental aspects cannot be said to be a thing of modern growth. It has its roots in the doctrine of the Incarnation, and, like that doctrine, was foreshadowed and prepared for even in the Old Law. When the great precept of the law was formulated, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart," devotion to the Sacred Heart was foreshadowed. When God became Man, making Himself visible in order to lead us to the love of the invisible, showing Himself kind merciful, loving, touched by love and hurt by ingratitude, the foundations of devotion to the Sacred Heart may be said to have been laid.

When St. John, who leaned on the breast of Our Lord at the feast of love, the Last Supper, penned the words, "Let us love God, since God has first loved us," he summed up the spirit of the devotion. And when St. Paul prayed that his converts might be founded in charity and might know the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, he pointed to the goal to which devotion to the Sacred Heart should lead us.

Though devotion to the Sacred Heart was thus implicitly revealed in the New Testament, and though many souls intimate with Our Lord during the centuries which followed grasped it still more clearly, the formal and explicit revelation of the devotion was reserved in God's wise providence for a later time, when charity had grown cold. (The historical development of the devotion up to the time of St. Margaret Mary will be found traced in larger works on the subject.) It was the second half of the 17th century that God chose. The Person of Our Lord was in danger of being forgotten. A time was at hand when God would be

represented as a stern Master, not as a loving Father.

On the other hand, human love would be glorified beyond measure and put above all laws. Then Our Lord, in His love, determined to make a fresh effort to win the hearts of men. In His own words, as reported by St. Margaret Mary, "this devotion was, as it were, a last effort with which He would favour men in these latter ages." It was as if that parable of the Gospel which is not really a parable were being enacted again. The Master of the vineyard had sent servants, who were treated with insult and injury. Then He said: "I have a Son most dear to Me; I will send Him, and they will reverence My Son." (Mark xii., 6; Luke xx., 13.)

It was in the years 1673 and 1674 that Our Lord began to make known the devotion to St. Margaret Mary, a Visitation nun, in Paray-le-Monial. He told her that He chose her "as an abyss of unworthiness and of ignorance for the accomplishment of a great design." He appeared to her, disclosing His heart, and said: "My heart is so inflamed with love for men that, not being able any longer to restrain within itself the flames of its ardent charity, it must spread them every where through your means, and manifest itself to men, that they may be enriched with its precious treasures." Thus did Our Lord bring once more before the minds of men His immense love for them and His desire for their welfare. "He made me see," the saint writes, "that the ardent desire He had of being loved by men, and of rescuing them from the path of perdition, had made Him form this design of manifesting His heart to men with all the treasures of love, of mercy, of grace, of sanctification, and of salvation that it contains."

The heart which Our Lord showed to St. Margaret Mary was "like a furnace," she says. But it was also surmounted by a cross and encircled with thorns, because Christ met, for the most part, with only ingratitude and forgetfulness in return for all His love. "If they rendered Me some return of love," He said, "I should esteem all that I had done for them as but little, and would do, if possible, still more for them." On another occasion Our Lord said: "Behold this heart which has so loved men, which has spared nothing, even to being exhausted and consumed, in order to testify to them its love. And the greater number of them make no other return than ingratitude, by their coldness and their forgetfulness of Me in this sacrament of love. But what is still more painful to Me is that it is hearts who are consecrated to Me who use Me thus." Such words demand serious consideration from us.

Here, then, we have this devotion formally presented to us by Our Lord. He places Himself before us, revealing His heart, and points to it as the living emblem of the tender love He has for us. He reminds us of how He has had to suffer for our ingratitude, and pleads with us, for our own sake and for His, to think of His love and love Him in return. In the course of His communications to St. Margaret Mary, He expressed His desire that those who wished to console Him should receive Him with devotion in Holy Communion, especially on the first Friday of each month; that they should pay special honour to the image of His Sacred Heart exposed in their homes and elsewhere; that they should spend an hour in prayer sometimes in union with Him overcome with anguish in Gethsemane, and that they should keep the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi as a special feast in honour of His love. In view of Our Lord's clearly expressed desire, we can hardly remain indifferent. We must take the matter to heart.

IV. "HE LOVED ME AND DELIVERED HIMSELF FOR ME"

One of the chief reasons why we neglect Our Lord and His love so much is that we do not reflect that this love is given to each of us personally. It is natural for me to regard Our Lord as loving men, as it were, all together, and to overlook the important fact that the wonderful story of His love is the story of His love for me personally.

When a millionaire presents a library or a public park to his native town, all the citizens, and I among them, benefit by thy gift; but it cannot be said to be a personal gift to me. But it is quite different with Our Lord's love. God's love is not divided, nor is it lessened by being given to many. We, with our finite minds and

affections, cannot hold a number of things in our mind at once, or take an interest in a great number of persons at thy same time, or love intensely, with a personal love, more than a few. We must not, however, attribute our limitations to God. "As the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts." He knows every grain of sand on the sea-shore separately, and He marks the fall of every sparrow. The very hairs of our head, He tells us Himself, are numbered. "He calleth His own sheep by name." (John x., 3.) He loves each one just as if there were no others on whom He bestowed His love and care.

Therefore, I must do my best to bring home to myself that God loved me from all eternity. He created me because He wanted me individually. He came on earth for me; He lived, worked, and suffered as He did for me personally. God died, not for me and a lot of other people all taken together, but through personal love for me, as I exist now. The Blessed Eucharist is a gift of love to me. And it is for me Christ offers Himself to His Father every day on the altar. Then only shall I begin to take the interest I ought in Christ's life when I realise how it is bound up with mine. Then only shall I begin to understand the love of the Sacred Heart when I realise that I personally have all Christ's love, just as I receive Him whole and entire in Holy Communion no matter how many others receive Him at the same time.

Nathan was once sent by God to King David, and told him a story of a rich man who spared his own flocks and seized and killed the single lamb of his poor neighbour in order to entertain his friend. David was filled with anger, and vowed that vengeance would be exacted for such cruelty and injustice. "Thou art the man," quietly rejoined Nathan; and he enumerated all God's benefits to him, and contrasted with them David's grievous sin. So, side by side with the wonderful story of Our Lord's love for me, I have the sad story of my ingratitude. We have considered already the gross ingratitude of men, and the pain it has inflicted on the heart of Our Lord. Now, I must say to myself, "Thou art the man." Our Lord has loved me as no friend on earth could love me. Should I dream of treating any friend as I treat Him? I should not like to have it said of me that I am of an ungrateful disposition, for it argues the worst kind of selfishness. But let me look on Our Lord and reflect on His love for me personally, and the efforts He has made to prove His love and win my heart, and then examine my own dispositions and conduct towards Him, and can I deny ingratitude? And what ingratitude it is!

V. PRACTICE

When St. Peter, after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost addressed the people and put before them their wickedness in crucifying their Messias, "they had compunction in their hearts, and said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles: 'what shall we do, me and brethren?'" (Acts ii., 37.) So, having tried to realise our obligations to Christ Our Lord, we ask ourselves the practical question: "What, then, are we to do?"

First, we must have the spirit of love and gratitude. No amount of devotional practices will do if they are not animated by love and a desire to repay Our Lord for all the love He gives us. St. Paul's words are well known, "If I should give all my goods to feed the poor and deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." We must make it our earnest endeavour, accordingly, to excite in our hearts genuine love for Our Lord by serious reflection on His love for us. The love which Christ has for me personally is the most wonderful truth in the world for me, but one which it is not easy for me to bring home to myself. Therefore, I must make it my business to reflect frequently and seriously upon it.

The realisation of Our Lord's love will naturally make me anxious to console His Sacred Heart for my own coldness and the coldness of others. I must make reparation for my own ingratitude in the first place, and for all the pain I have caused the Sacred Heart. But I must not stop here. If I had a friend who was treated very unkindly and unjustly by some of his neighbours, I should not be insensible to it, but should do my best to show my sympathy for my friend in his trouble, and soften his pain. It was this instinct which made Clovis exclaim when he first heard the story of Calvary. "Would that Clovis and his Franks had been there!"

Christ Our Lord is as much a stranger in His own world as when He could get no lodging at Bethlehem. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Surely I should hasten to open to Him and offer Him a warm welcome. But the question may be, raised, "What can I do for Christ? Will my best efforts merit His consideration?" Our Lord knows our weakness, but He wants us even as we are. He tells us Himself that even a cup of cold water given for love of Him is remembered by Him. He marked with careful eye the widow's insignificant offering in the temple, and He called His Apostles to tell them that she had given more than all the rest. It is the love in the heart of the giver He values. He had only one question, thrice repeated, to put to St. Peter before giving him complete charge of His flock, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Mary Magdalene gave her vase of precious ointment, and in gratitude Christ promised everlasting memory of her act of love.

Those who do His Will, He tells us, are like mother and brothers and sisters to Him. He was grateful to His Apostles because "they had continued with Him in His trials" - though, surely, the Apostles were greatly lacking in generosity to their Master when His great suffering came. Still, He excused them; He did not expect too much. "The spirit is willing; it is the flesh that is weak." Whatever we do to the very least of Christ's brethren, He tells us, He takes as done to Himself. And in return for these small services He gives life eternal. "Come, ye blessed of My Father... I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink... You did it to Me." Therefore, in spite of our weakness, we all have it in our power to give great joy and consolation to the heart of Jesus.

Our love, however, is not to be mere sentiment, but must show itself in deed. "My little children," St. John urges us, "let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." We have Our Lord dwelling among us, and there at once is a great opportunity presented to us. If there was some person in my neighbourhood whom I visited but rarely, or under compulsion, or only in a formal way, it would be safe to infer that this person was not a dear friend of mine. Our Lord is living in His own house, perhaps very close to me. I go here and there for business and pleasure; I go to see my friends. Do I visit frequently this Friend above all friends who waits and longs for my coming? He has a banquet ready for me, too, every day. Is my want of appreciation for His friendship the only reason why I refuse His invitations? Each day He renews the offering of Himself to His Father as a victim for my sake. Am I there, joining in His offering, as often as is possible? By honouring Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, by hearing Mass devoutly and receiving the Bread from heaven lovingly in Holy Communion, I show true devotion to the Sacred Heart. The grateful remembrance of His suffering and death will also give much pleasure to Our Lord. If a man died in agony for us, we should never forget it.

But a Man has died for us, nailed alive to a cross and that Man was God. Yet, in how few lives does it seem to make any difference! Going round the Stations of the Cross sometimes would be a fitting way of showing our gratitude for Our Lord's love and consoling Him for so much forgetfulness.

The Apostleship of Prayer offers us another means of practical devotion to the Sacred Heart. It enables us to turn every part of our lives to good account. By uniting our thoughts, words and acts to those of Christ our Lord, and offering everything for the intentions of His Sacred Heart, we are able to make even our most commonplace actions truly valuable, and advance Christ's interests in ways which will probably never be known to us in this life. If we are devoted to Our Lord we shall be keen about His interests; we shall be anxious to see Him loved and served, and shall do our best to bring that about. If St. Paul's words are verified in us, "The love of Christ is pressing us," we shall not waste the many opportunities which present themselves of helping on good works, of spreading the Faith, of combating evil. With the consecration of ourselves will naturally go the consecration of our homes and families to the Sacred Heart.

Finally, we should make use of the emblem Our Lord Himself has given us - the image of the Sacred Heart. It is a reminder to us of Our Lord Himself, of His love, and of the pain He suffers through ingratitude. It sums up, in brief, all that devotion to the Sacred Heart means. Therefore, whether in the form of medals, scapulars, badges, pictures or statues, the representation of the Sacred Heart should be a familiar object with us.

VI. THE FRUITS OF THE DEVOTION

Once we understand the nature of devotion to the Sacred Heart we shall not be surprised at the fruits it produces. Have you ever watched the coming of day and seen the grey half-light change to pearl, and objects take shape, and shadows clothe themselves with colour, till all the beauty of the landscape stood revealed? Have you ever looked on a parched and barren land, where not one single blade of grass could be seen, and welcomed the living green and the glow of flowers when the rains came? If so, you can appreciate the changes which are brought about in souls by true devotion to the Sacred Heart. "God is love," St. John says when he wants to describe God in one word, and devotion to the Sacred Heart brings home to us God's love. Once we are really convinced of the personal love of Jesus Christ, God and Man, for each one of us, life and everything it contains are touched with a new light. Puzzles are solved, burdens are lightened, pains are softened, peace and joy in increased measure are given to us.

If we catch the spirit of the devotion we shall learn confidence in Our Lord, which is the short cut to happiness and heaven. We shall know Our Lord and become intimate with Him. Knowing Him and loving Him, we shall live for Him, thus fulfilling the sole end for which we were created.

By our efforts to make reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus we shall win Our Lord's gratitude. Though we are a thousand times His debtors, He will consider Himself under obligation to us. What a favourable position we shall be in, both in life and in death, if Jesus Christ looks upon us as His creditors! In His revelations to St. Margaret Mary Our Lord frequently spoke of the favours He would grant to those who would be devoted to His Sacred Heart. The well-known Twelve Promises, though not given by Our Lord in this precise form, have been collected from various parts of the writings of St. Margaret Mary. The following passage from one of her letters is a good summary of the blessings which will follow devotion to the Sacred Heart, and surely offers a sufficient inducement to us to endeavour earnestly to acquire the true spirit of this devotion.

"Why cannot I relate," she writes, "all that I know of this lovable devotion, and reveal to the whole world the treasury of grace that Jesus Christ has hidden in this adorable Heart, and designs to pour out in abundance on all those who will practise it? ...I do not know of any devotion in the spiritual life that is better suited to raise a soul in a short time to the highest perfection, and to cause it to enjoy the real sweetness that is found in the service of Jesus Christ. Yes, I say it boldly, if people knew how pleasing it is to Jesus Christ, there is no Christian, however little love he may have for this adorable Saviour, who would not at once practise it.

"Try all you can that at least persons in religion may embrace it, for they will derive from it such help that no other means would be required to restore the most ill-regulated communities to their first fervour and to the most exact regularity; and to bring those who live in the strictest regularity to the highest perfection.

"People in the world will find by means of this devotion all the helps necessary for their state of life - that is, peace in their families, relief in their labours, the blessing of heaven on all their undertakings, consolation in all their troubles. In this Sacred Heart they will find a place of refuge during their whole life, and, above all, at the hour of death. Ah! how sweet it is to die after having had a tender and constant devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ!"

If we are to know "the charity of Christ, which surpasseth knowledge," and if we are to live, "not for ourselves, but for Him who died for us," we must humbly and earnestly ask that grace of God, from whom all good things come. As the Father has loved us so much as to give His Son for our redemption, surely He will also give us the grace to repay love with love, if we really desire it. We have Our Lord's reminder: "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the Good Spirit to them that ask Him."

PROMISES

Made by Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary in favour of those who practise devotion to His Sacred Heart.

1. I will give them the graces necessary for their state.
2. I will give peace in their families.
3. I will comfort them in all their trials and afflictions.
4. I will be their secure refuge in life and death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners will find My Heart an ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall advance rapidly towards perfection.
9. I will bless every dwelling in which an image of My Heart shall be exposed and honoured.
10. I will give priests a peculiar facility in converting the most hardened souls.
11. The persons who spread this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be effaced.
12. I promise thee, in the excessive mercy of My Heart, that Its all-powerful love will grant to all those who communicate on nine consecutive first Fridays of the month the grace of final repentance, they shall not die in My disfavour nor without receiving their Sacraments, for My Divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.