



**MEDITATIONS
ON THE
MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

*Based upon the Writings of
Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar*

SAINT JOSEPH SEBASTIAN PELCZAR

Bishop of Przemyśl, Poland

Founder of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar [PEL-char] was born in Poland on January 17, 1842, in the small, southwestern town of Korczyna [Kor-CHIN-a], where he spent his childhood raised in an atmosphere of traditional Polish piety.

After two initial years of education at the local primary school in Korczyna, his parents, recognizing his exceptional talents, sent him to continue his schooling at the district town of Rzeszów [JESH-oof].

Already as a young student, Joseph Sebastian had decided to devote himself to the service of God. He wrote in his diary: "Earthly ideals are fading away. I see the ideal of life in sacrifice, and the ideal of sacrifice in priesthood."

On his completion of the sixth grade at the Rzeszow Academy, Joseph Sebastian entered minor seminary and later received admission in 1860 to theological studies at the diocesan major seminary in Przemyśl [PSHEM-ish].

Ordained a priest for the Diocese of Przemyśl on July 17, 1864, Father Joseph Sebastian was first assigned to the parish of Sambor where he worked as a curate for a year and a half. Then, in 1866, he was sent to Rome where he spent two years of studies at both the Collegium Romanum, presently the Gregorian University) and the Institute of St. Apollinaris (today known as the Lateran University.) These studies in Rome not only broadened the young priest's knowledge but also filled Father Joseph Sebastian's heart with a deep, abiding love for the Church and her visible head, the Roman Pontiff. During his short span of only two years in the Eternal City, Father Pelczar earned two doctoral degrees in theology and canon law, respectively. He subsequently returned to Poland where he briefly served as curate at Wojutyce (voy-yoo-TEH-cha) and Sambor, before becoming a professor at the major seminary of Przemyśl (1869-1877) and at the Jagellonian (yag-ell-OHN-ian) University in Krakow [CROCK-oof] (1877-99).

As both professor and Chairperson of the Department of Theology, Father Pelczar gained the reputation of being a wise scholar, a competent organizer and a friend to young people. As a sign of their high regard for him, his academic community entrusted Father Pelczar with

the distinguished responsibility of Rector (1882-83) of Krakow's Alma Mater, the Jagiellonian University.

Striving to live up to his ideal of a Polish priest dedicated to the people, Father Pelczar did not confine himself merely to academic pursuits but instead immersed himself generously in social service and charitable activities, for example in the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Society for the Education of the People. In the latter of the two, he served as president for sixteen years, during which time he established hundreds of libraries, delivered numerous free lectures, published and distributed more than a thousand books, and opened a school for servant women. In 1891, Father Pelczar founded the Confraternity of Our Lady, Queen of the Polish Crown, which had as its purpose, besides its religious duties, to care for the poor, for orphans, apprentices and domestics, especially those who were sick and unemployed.

Father Joseph Sebastian recognized that the problems existing in his times were actually opportunities to recognize and fulfill the will of God. Therefore, in the year 1894, in Krakow, Poland, he founded the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, with the aim of spreading the Kingdom of the love of the Heart of Jesus. He desired that the Sisters be signs and instruments of the love of the Divine Heart for girls, for the sick and for all people in need.

Five years later, in 1899, Father Pelczar was named auxiliary to the Most Reverend L. Solecki [so-LET-skee], Bishop of Przemy 1, and at his death in 1900 Bishop Pelczar was named local Ordinary of the Diocese. During the twenty-five years of his episcopate, Bishop Pelczar was widely regarded as a good pastor devoted to the people entrusted to him.

In spite of poor health, Bishop Pelczar worked tirelessly for the religious and social needs of his diocese. For example, to encourage the faithful of his diocese to grow in the spirit of faith, he made regular pastoral visits to the parishes and devoted a special care to elevating the moral and intellectual consciousness of the clergy. Above all, he himself exemplified a life of deep piety as evidenced in his devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. He was an ardent adorer of the Most Blessed Sacrament and would often encourage his diocesan flock to participate in Eucharistic devotions. Through his efforts, the number of churches and chapels grew and many churches were restored. Despite the unfavorable political circumstances of the times, Bishop Pelczar conducted no less than three diocesan synods. Always responsive to the needs of the faithful in his diocese, St. Joseph Sebastian took special care of the poorest ones. Nurseries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, schools for poor girls from the country, and tuition assistance

for the education of poor seminarians were but a few of his works. He sympathized with the plight of workers treated unjustly and those forced to emigrate due to the difficult economic situation. He emphasized the need to implement the social teaching of the Church as expressed in the documents of Pope Leo XIII on the Church's social teaching.

Extraordinarily gifted by God, Saint Joseph Sebastian developed and multiplied the talents given to him, among which was his rich literary heritage. He authored numerous theological, historical, and canonical books, pastoral letters, sermons, addresses, as well as devotional books and textbooks.

Having fulfilled God's will in the face of many obstacles, Bishop Pelczar died in the odor of sanctity on the night of March 28, 1924. During his funeral service, his former student and successor in the department of theology, Father Antoni Bystrzonowski [Bist-cho-NOF-skee] had this to say of him: "The late Bishop of Przemy 1 personified the most beautiful qualities and talents of the episcopate. Behold his tireless pastoral zeal, his spirit of initiative joined to energetic action; see the splendor of his scholarship, or, what is even more noteworthy, behold the sanctity of his virtues; above all, witness the shining example of his exceptional work joined to truly youthful zeal."

On June 2, 1991, the Holy Father John Paul II beatified Bishop Joseph Sebastian in Rzeszów, Poland, and, in Rome, on May 18, 2003, canonized him a Saint of the Universal Church.

The relics of Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar rest in the Cathedral Church at Przemy 1. His feast day is observed on January 19th.

OPENING REMARKS

The canonization of St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar by Pope John Paul II on May 18, 2003 in Rome became an opportunity for us to become aware of the treasures of the interior life of this Saint. The meditations below are an endeavor to present as closely as possible in text and form the theology of the Heart of God that St. Joseph Sebastian included in his many ascetical works.

It is worth emphasizing that while devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus stands among the fundamental pillars of St. Joseph Sebastian's spirituality, it is also deeply rooted in the Most Holy Mystery of the Altar, which may well explain the Saint's very frequent references to Eucharistic themes in his writings.

The subsequent texts are based upon the following works of St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar:

- *Jesus Christ, Exemplar and Teacher of the Priest: Meditations for Priests*, Przemysław 1905;
- *Brief Points on the Praying of the Rosary: Joining Vocal Prayer to Meditation*, Krakow 1918;
- *Addresses and Sermons 1877 – 1899*, Krakow 1998;
- *Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Przemysław 1921;
- *Various Sermons and Occasional Addresses*, Przemysław 1926;
- *The Revelation of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque*, Przemysław 1904;
- *Meditations for Religious on the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, Krakow 1918;
- *Meditations on Religious Life for Religious*, Krakow 1917;
- *The Spiritual Life as Christian Perfection*, Przemysław 1924, Krakow, 2003.



AN INVITATION TO THE DIVINE HEART

The voice of God calls joyfully to us: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest* (Mt 11:28) and God invites us even here and now to a profound union with Himself in perfect love. The Lord desires that we would bear all difficulties and sufferings in union with Him throughout our entire life for only then will such burdens become easier. He especially invites those experiencing difficulties – those suffering not only physically but spiritually, and sinners – and who among us can say he is not a sinner? The Heart of the Savior invites each and everyone. He calls all to Himself, for He desires by means of such an encounter to reveal and thereby give Himself to us.

Our assent to this invitation opens before us the vast possibilities of discovering, knowing and experiencing true love and happiness. It also introduces us into the mystery of suffering, something difficult for us to understand and accept. It depends completely upon us whether we will take up His offer.

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar writes: “Do not excuse yourself on the premise that you are unable to know the truths and ways of God, for the Lord has indeed given you a heart capable of love. In fact, so that your heart would truly love, God discloses His love to it and bestows upon it His grace. Even the simple one is able to love perfectly and in the school of love can become wise in the things of God.”

As St. Margaret Mary has said, the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is like an open book from which it is easiest to learn the art of love, particularly when one reads it beneath the Savior's Cross, in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament, or after Holy Communion. Why is it so difficult for many to see that everything a person most needs or most longs is to be found within the Heart of God? Perhaps it is because we think of this Heart as a mystery far removed from the affairs of everyday human life. While people like to discover and to learn the unknown, to conquer what is difficult, they are still lacking the essential connection

between life and faith óthat is, faith in God's love and in entrusting themselves to this love unto the end. And yet there are countless visible and actual proofs of this love of God that He shows in so human a way. *God is Love* (1 Jn 4:16), the beloved disciple of the Heart of Jesus reminds us. In this name of God is contained His very essence. *Whoever is without love does not know God* (1 Jn 4:8). We must continually learn this love because such knowledge leads to greater love.

St. Joseph Sebastian places these words upon the lips of Mary as she stands beneath the Cross: "Sons of men, as you have already caused suffering to my Son, quickly, hasten at once and find in His wounds the healing for your own. See His hands extended to you, behold His opened Heart. Come then with your hearts to this Heart ó He will forgive you. I am interceding on your behalf, but I am also begging you: Do not crucify my Son again, but instead greatly love Him in union with me."



THE ESSENCE AND AIM OF DEVOTION TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

According to St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is the summary of our faith and our norm for the perfect Christian life. The aim of this devotion is to better know and repay the love of the Lord Jesus. The object of its worship is the Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Most Blessed Virgin and later pierced by the lance upon the Cross. This Heart is intimately united with the Divinity of Christ. As the Heart of the God-Man, It belongs to the Divine Person. It is also the fire and emblem of the Divine and human love of the Incarnate Word. This love that He as God shares with the Father and the Spirit is the same love that filled His human Heart, the ineffable love that imbued all His words and deeds.

This Divine Heart, so worthy of love, is the temple of Divinity, the throne of grace, the seat of mercy, the treasury filled with gifts and source of Divine life upon earth. From this Heart flowed forth all the works of love. From this Heart was born the holy Catholic Church. From It issued the seven sacraments as seven springs of salvation. Even to this day, all goodness flows from this Heart since it is Itself peace, reparation, oblation, life and resurrection. For the sake of love, the Incarnate Word emptied himself and was meek, merciful and ready for all sufferings. The Heart of Jesus - pitying all misery, weeping at the tomb of Lazarus and allowing the sinful woman to approach His feet, was filled with this love, the greatest signs of which are the crib, the Cross, the altar and the tabernacle.

Our love, enkindled through meditation on the love of Jesus, protects us from sin, gains us entrance into the Heart of Jesus, and causes us to imitate His virtues and adopt His desires. Our love stirs up our zeal to spread the Kingdom of the Heart of God upon earth. We then become eager to make various sacrifices for this Heart, to do deeds of reparation for insults and rejection, and to turn to this Heart in all our needs.

To the human heart, love is in the moral order what blood is in the physical. While it depends upon our will, called the queen of our spiritual life, to choose the object of our love, still it is commonly said that it is the heart that loves. Love in the heart gives rise to strong feelings that often entice the will, even when reason is opposing. The human heart must love something, and what it loves it comes to resemble.

In the Holy Scripture God speaks: *My son, give me your heart* (Prv 23:26). It is at once a request to give our will and our very selves. The Savior assures us: *Where your treasure is, there also is your heart* (Mt 6:21) and again *Out of the heart...come evil designs: murder, adulterous conduct...stealing* (Mt 15:19). Let us form our hearts then solely according to the Heart of God.



THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS THROUGHOUT THE AGES

Regarding the history of the revelation of the Heart of God, Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar writes: öAs the rising sun dispatches before itself the morning star, and then enlightens with his rays, first the peaks of the highest mountains, later the lower hills and finally the valleys and the whole earth, thus so has Jesus, Christ, the Sun of Justice, revealed by stages the mystery of His Heart from which followed the devotion to this Heart spreading His light ever wider.

By means of this light, He first illumined the highest peaks, that is, holy and chosen souls í and using St. Margaret Mary as His instrument, He then extended His light onto the valleys, that is, upon all Christians, until He had enlightened the whole earth. How like morning stars those figures of the Old Testament announcing the love of the Heart of Jesus: the side of Adam from whence came Eve; í the Paschal Lamb; the flow of water from the rock for Moses; and the vessel of manna within the Ark of the Covenant.ö

Like rays emanating from this light were the manger, the house at Nazareth, the miracles the Savior performed for love of people; likewise His words revealing the ardor of His love and His interior life. *I have come to cast fire upon the earth, the Lord Jesus has said, how I wish it were already enkindled!* (Lk 12:49). And in another place: *There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends* (Jn 15:13).

These rays were radiated forth with the greatest of light in the Lord's institution of the Unbloody Sacrifice, the Most Blessed Sacrament; in Holy Communion; and in His Passion and Death. What is more, even after His death, the Savior allowed His side to be opened with the lance, allowing the piercing of His Heart, out of which gushed forth Blood and water so that we would know not only that this Heart has loved us to the end, but that the Holy Church was born from this Heart, and that this Heart has become the source of salvation and renewal for everyone.

The Most Holy Mother of God, preeminent of all, understood the mystery of the Heart of Jesus. The mystery was comprehended also by the Lord's disciples and holy women particularly Mary Magdalene. On Calvary devotees of the Heart of Jesus can be seen in the Good Thief and in the Centurion. The immeasurable love of the Savior was meditated upon and praised by the Christians of the first centuries. Undoubtedly, many of them, especially the martyrs, were deeply aware of the mystery of the Heart of Jesus. The writers and doctors of the Church in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Centuries, placed more emphasis upon the piercing of the side of the Savior with the lance, and they saw in this a profound mystery associated with the saving font that belongs to Holy Mother Church for the world's purification and sanctification. At the end of the Eleventh Century devotion to the Holy Wounds grew stronger and opened the way to devotion to the Heart of Jesus. There were many saints and writers who were devotees of this Heart, among them St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare, St. Bonaventure, St. Francis de Sales, St. Gertrude, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa and others. Thus was this mystery revealed to all mankind and in varied ways.



THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PARTICULAR DEVOTION TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Despite His own great proofs attesting His love for us, the Divine Heart was not sufficiently known, honored and loved, and so the Heart of God had somehow to remind and clearly express how much He loves us. It can truly be said that then this Heart, unable to restrain Himself any longer in love, thus revealed all His treasure.

At Paray-le-Monial in the seventeenth century there occurred the revelation of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus to the whole world. The Visitation nun, St. Margaret Mary, became the instrument of Providence in this revelation of God's mystery. She found a special guide in her confessor, Father Claude de la Colombiere who likewise became an ardent apostle of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Through the revelations imparted to this ordinary and simple, cloistered nun, as well as in the difficulties and sufferings she had to undergo, the Lord Jesus gave proof that He often undertakes great things by means of those who, humanly speaking, are considered insignificant.

Speaking about the particular devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Joseph Sebastian tells us: "The third revelation took place on June 16, 1675, the Sunday during the Octave of Corpus Christi. The Lord said to her: "Behold this Heart that has so loved men that It spared nothing, even going so far as to exhaust and consume Itself to prove Its love to them. And in return, I receive from the greater part of men nothing but ingratitude through their contempt, irreverence, sacrileges and coldness with which they treat Me in the Sacrament of Love...Therefore I ask of you that the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi be dedicated as a feast in honor of My Heart, ... I promise you that my Heart will open Itself wide to pour forth lavishly the influence of Its Divine love on all who will render and procure for It this honor."

St. Margaret Mary endeavored zealously to bring about the establishment of this separate feast to honor the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. She devoted herself to the honor of the Divine Heart each Friday, particularly on the First Friday of every month. On that day, she undertook to receive Holy Communion with special love so as to show gratitude to the Lord for His immeasurable love.

In 1688, the Holy See permitted bishops to introduce the devotion to the Heart of Jesus in their dioceses. In 1765, although Pope Clement XIII did grant permission for the celebration of a separate feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, this was imparted however only to Poland, to the Arch-Confraternity of the Heart of Jesus in Rome, and to churches and dioceses that expressly requested it. A century later, Pope Blessed Pius IX established the feast of the Heart of Jesus for the universal Church, and Pope Leo XIII elevated this to the dignity of a feast of the first class.

St. Joseph Sebastian exhorts us: "Let us then strive to honor this day. What is best is that we would, beginning right from morning, offer all our concerns to the Heart of Jesus; we participate in the Holy Mass, receive Holy Communion in reparation, and recite the act of apology and offering to this Heart. We may make the Stations of the Cross, pray in adoration before the Most Holy Sacrament, read a passage from the Sacred Scriptures, or perform a charitable act—all this out of love for the Lord Jesus."

5



THE FRUITS OF DEVOTION TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar teaches us that the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is the wellspring overflowing with graces from which all can draw; the source which is accessible to all. The Lord Jesus invites everyone to this fountain: *All you who thirst, come to the water.* Come, arid hearts, and those consumed with the fever of worries and temptations; come, draw from this source the water of life. Hearts, wounded and weak, come to be healed and to find your strength in It. Hasten to the Divine Heart in all your spiritual and temporal needs. You need not look far, for this Heart lives always in the Most Blessed Sacrament. As many times as you receive Holy Communion, so often do you press your lips to the opened Heart of Jesus.

Hearts that are closely united with the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus endeavor to make reparation to Him for all transgressions. They live by His love. With the love of Christ or, to put it another way, with Christian love, they love God, themselves, their neighbor—all besides. Such is the greatest fruit obtained by means of devotion to the Divine Heart of our Savior and what we must desire and seek. To those who bear and renounce all things for the Kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom of love, the Lord Jesus confers the beatitudes and the promise of possessing not only Himself but eternal happiness as well. Such are the people of the beatitudes: the poor, the sorrowing, the meek and humble, the just, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers and the persecuted. They shall be rich, consoled, filled, granted mercy; they will see God face to face and will rejoice that He calls them His sons. Here on earth we can experience these fruits only partially, however in heaven does our ultimate happiness await us.

Through the cooperation of Margaret Mary, the Lord Jesus has made to us sure promises that He will show Himself especially gracious and generous towards those who will have a zealous devotion to His Divine Heart. These promises are in some way united to the evangelical beatitudes. Devotees of the Heart of God will be given all graces necessary for fulfilling the obligations of their state in life; they will be granted peace in their families, consolation in distress, refuge in life and at the hour of death, blessing in their undertakings; mercy for their sinfulness and increase in zeal.

Such promises however of the merciful love of the Lord Jesus should not be understood to be something automatic, superstitious, or like a business transaction; instead it is only with a person's faithful efforts that these promises are attained. Our fidelity and cooperation with the grace of the Divine Heart are essential to realize these promises. The practice of the First Fridays of the month should introduce the Catholic to a permanent, frequent and monthly reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, a practice leading to a life in the state of sanctifying grace and in union with the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. It is a great grace and it makes us ready to fulfill our obligations and our aim in life. This practice is an invaluable help to us in daily actualizing Christian love, in evangelizing with the power of Christ's love, acquiring merits, and passing on to an eternal happiness in the grace of God.



THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE FOR THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Love is comprised of a personal bond between the individual and God. On God's part, this love introduces into the human soul the faculty that enables the soul to receive God and to somehow reach Him. It is a supernatural opening of the heart that gives us the ability to be aware of God's presence. On our part, our love is a spiritual action originating in our will and in our decision directed toward an act. Our love means our choice of God, our acceptance, awe, wonder and worship of Him. Love directs the whole person toward God: the longing of our heart and soul, all our thoughts and strength. Such a meeting of the soul with God is always carried out through the Heart of Christ Jesus who is our Gate to the supernatural life, our way to God.

Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar teaches us the kind of love one must have who desires to repay the love of the Heart of God: "Above all," he writes, "your love must manifest itself in its perfect agreement with God's will and thus in your eager acceptance of all that God sends you in difficult moments as in happy ones. May this love also show itself in this, namely, that in God you see your Supreme Good, that you choose Him above all else, preferring even to lose all things rather than to offend Him."

Love is true and perfect when it shows itself not simply in external practices, in mere words or tender feelings, but when it flows from a cooperation of our will with God's grace. True love shows itself especially in increasing honor and love for the Heart of Jesus. Such love rests upon the deep foundation of humility and is accompanied by the fear of God that urges us to keep ourselves from even the smallest sin. Love is faithful when it keeps all the commandments and transgresses

none of them. Moreover, it laments its own sins and those of others; it suffers over people's blindness and contempt for God and it does all within its power so that sin and error will disappear from the face of the earth. Love is pure and whole when it loves in God and only in Him all that is worthy of love. It guards against the self-love that seeks everywhere its own glory and interests. Love is disinterested and noble when it loves God not only for His gifts but for His own sake. In such a way, love inclines the soul to detachment from creatures, self-denial, and the sacrifice of our whole being, that is to say, the surrender of our reason through faith and prayer; the surrender of our heart through union with God; the surrender of our will through obedience; the surrender of our body, through chastity, penance and work; and the offering of our entire life, through our faithful service. Perfect love is ardent and persevering when it is furthest from tepidity and despondency. Such love inclines our heart towards the love of God, not simply in bright moments such as in consolation and peace, but also in dark times of dryness and trials. It directs us to think of God, to long for Him, to speak to Him in prayer and to unite ourselves with Him in Holy Communion.



REPARATION TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

As a manifestation of love, the Holy Eucharist is the masterpiece of the Heart of Jesus, present always in this Most Holy Sacrament, ever living and open to all. Devotion therefore to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is a most efficacious means to intensify our honor and love for the Lord Jesus hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

For love of us, the Lord Jesus not only lowered Himself, veiling His majesty beneath the sacramental species, but He opened Himself also to human contempt and ingratitude. In various places in the world, there are many sacrileges being committed through people's contempt and ingratitude, by way of theft from churches or unworthy reception of Holy Communion. A great number of Catholics omit Mass on holy days of obligation. More and more people become victims of murder, violence, robbery and fraud. Narcotics, abortion and pornography are destroying family life and society. The Lord Jesus patiently endures all this in silence.

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar teaches: If you would worthily honor the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, strive to expiate the insults committed against God: If unbelievers insult Him, you then, believe and publicly confess the faith; if they blaspheme Him, you, worship the Lord loudly, and encourage others to do so; if some offend the Lord by sacrilege, you then, receive Him into your pure heart with proper preparation and thanksgiving, with great love and with the intention of making expiation for unworthy Communion; if you cannot receive the Lord sacramentally, then do so at least spiritually. If the wicked desecrate churches, you then, conduct yourselves within them with respect and humility, your joy being to dwell in the houses of the Lord and to adorn them. If many are indifferent towards the Most Blessed Sacrament, you then, think of Him as often as you can,

enthusiastically read, speak and listen to Him, and, above all, long for Him ardently, desiring to be as a sanctuary lamp burning before the altar. As often as you are able, strive daily to participate fully in Holy Mass and to visit the Most Blessed Sacrament, or, if you are unable, at least turn to Jesus in your thoughts to send Him your ardent sighs or prayerful aspirations. Try to participate in the First Friday Holy Mass of expiation. Make weekly or at least monthly adoration. Kneel before the Most Blessed Sacrament, greet and adore Him. To the furthest extent that you are able, promulgate the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The practice of the holy hour is recognized by the Church and deserves still greater attention since its purpose is for us to unite ourselves with the experiences of the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Olives and to make expiation through the merits of the Lord's Passion. Each month, on the day before First Friday, from 11 p.m. until midnight, St. Margaret Mary practiced this Holy Hour on her knees before the Most Blessed Sacrament. Today the practice of the Holy Hour is observed in parishes and churches, and is usually joined with the evening Eucharistic Sacrifice as an expiatory adoration uniting us with the suffering Heart of Jesus.

In order to make expiation to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for the insults that He continually receives from people, there is a need for deep renewal in our life and concern for our purity of heart.

8



THE HOLY SPIRIT - GIFT OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Although the Lord Jesus ascended and entered into His heavenly glory, He did not sever His close union with humanity but even strengthened it. Now in an infinite, spiritual realm, the Lord Jesus is able to give Himself at once personally to each and everyone in the world. He does this by means of the Holy Spirit who is the personifying love between God the Father and God the Son. In the descent of the Holy Spirit and through His action, we can also recognize the gift of Jesus to us, that is, the love of His Divine Heart. St. Joseph Sebastian reminds us that the Holy Spirit enlightens, sanctifies and strengthens the human soul, redeemed by the Blood of Jesus. In fact, through the future merits of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit was already doing so from the beginning of the world. The Savior promised to send this Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. He repeated this promise later after His Resurrection, and commanded them to *wait until they were clothed with power from on high* (Lk 24:49). On the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of the Lord, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles gathered together in the Cenacle. There is a great mystery in such a number of days. Fifty days after consuming the paschal lamb and the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites received the old covenant on Mount Sinai. Similarly, fifty days after the Resurrection of the Savior, who as Lamb of God had led humanity out of the Egypt of sin, the New Covenant of love and grace was promulgated to the whole world. The Holy Spirit gave the Apostles the radiant light of faith and enkindled in them a great fire of love toward God and neighbor.

The Holy Spirit desires to come to each person and abundantly bestow His gifts, but He requires that we desire and implore them. For this reason He gives us a spirit of prayer, and what is even more, Himself

makes intercession within us and for us, *in groanings*, as the Apostle says, *that cannot be expressed in speech* (Rom 8:26). All the gifts of the Holy Spirit are closely united with sanctifying grace and only in relation to sanctifying grace can these gifts be received and increased and unfortunately, lost. Mortal sin saddens the Spirit and separates us from Him.

The Holy Spirit strengthens and enlivens our faith, sustains us in our weakness, arms us for battle against evil, and gives us fortitude. He is the Spirit of light and holiness, power and consolation. He enlightens the teaching Church and gives her the gift of infallibility. He enlightens the faithful also by preparing their hearts so that they can believe. He also indirectly acts through people and in the circumstances of life, in joys, as in crosses. He speaks directly through illumination and inspirations.

Through the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus renewed the face of the earth, renewing all humanity and through the sacraments the Holy Spirit pours out upon us the sanctifying grace that flows from the wounds of Jesus. As the personified love of the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit unites us with the Holy Trinity, leading us as Consoler, to the sweetest and most sure sources, particularly the Most Merciful Heart of Jesus that ever beats for us in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Before each prayer and each important task, let us ask the Holy Spirit for God's light: Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind and enkindle my heart with the fire of your love.



MOTHER MARY – THE GIFT OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS AND OUR WAY TO HIM

ōAmong the privileges that God has so abundantly bestowed upon the Most Blessed Virgin,ö writes St. Joseph Sebastian, öthe greatest is this, namely, that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, He who is consubstantial with the Father, God from God, Light from Light, took from her human flesh. All her other privileges and graces óher Immaculate Conception, her protection from every stain of sin, her perpetual virginity, her fullness of gifts, her radiance of virtues and Assumption, all these are as rays from a glorious sun whose center is her Divine Maternityí He whom heaven and earth can neither contain nor encompass remained within the virginal womb of Mary...He who feeds all creatures was nourished with milk at her breast...He, at whose mere nod all things are subject, was obedient to her.ö

Mary is a precious gift to us from the Divine Heart. Her motherly heart is a reflection of the Heart of Jesus.

St. Joseph Sebastian continues, öShe became Mother at the moment she conceived and gave birth to the Son of God, becoming Mother even to the entire Christian family since the Lord Jesus is our Head and we are His members. This motherhood was ratified on Calvary when Mary again gave birth to us by participating in the pain of the Redeemer. On that occasion, at His words: *Woman, behold your son* (Jn 19:26), the Lord Jesus conferred upon His Mother not only the name but the sentiments of a Mother; He imparted from His Heart to hers the fire of His love. From the height of the Cross, the Lord Jesus beheld His most beloved Motherô her heart pierced with the sword of suffering yet filled with love for humanity. So He desired that she would become the Mother of mankind and He bequeathed this as His last will and testament.

The Mother of God exercises her motherhood over all people but especially those who receive this truth with trust. She fulfils her office

with such care that the love of all mothers upon earth cannot compare with her motherly love.

ōO, how great and how noble is this Mother! The Son of God was Himself obedient to her on earth; at her request He hastened His miracle at Cana and made her the mediatrix of heavenly gifts. The Fathers of the Church assert that through her Son's might, Mary is so powerful that nothing can resist her power as a *Mother on her knees* and her intercession is efficacious. Moreover, the saints testify that our prayers will be answered more swiftly if we entrust them to the hands of Mary since this merciful Mother joins her own merits to our prayers.ō

This motherhood and intercession of Mary is an ineffable happiness for all people and thus to each one of us. How can we not give thanks then to the Lord?



THE HOLY CHURCH – THE GIFT OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

St. John the Evangelist recorded: *One of the soldiers thrust a lance into his side, and immediately blood and water gushed forth* (Jn 19:34). The piercing of the side and Heart of the Lord Jesus became a sign of the ability of all humanity to have entrance into this Heart; and the gushing forth of blood and water from His side became a symbol of the holy sacraments. As once Eve came forth from the side of Adam, so too the side of Christ has the Church come forth, and with her the sources of the graces she distributes for our salvation.

The Church is the herald of the Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus, the Kingdom of truth and grace. The Lord entrusted to her all the riches of Redemption, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the chosen Spouse of the Lord, His Mystical Body in which He lives, acts and shows His love. The Church is a mother to humanity since she is ever giving birth to Christ in the world. She is an intermediary who always distributes heavenly treasures. The Church is a spiritual mother, since through baptism she brings to birth the children of God and through the grace of Jesus Christ, sustains supernatural life in them. She teaches them, feeds them, comforts, protects and leads them to heaven. Thus from their birth into God's life she cares for these her children until natural death, and remembers them even after death.

The Holy Catholic Church is a work of infinite love. The Lord Jesus entrusted to her His truth, His law, His grace and power. He also strengthened her and made her fruitful through the descent of the Holy Spirit. What is more, He instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament in which He not only distributes immeasurable graces but in which He also remains as Divine Benefactor to His Church to be for her the sacrifice, life, light, strength, consolation and center of God's service.

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar spoke and wrote with great enthusiasm and with ardent love about the Church as our spiritual mother: ōWho is

able to recount the virtues of this mother? This mother, the Catholic Church, is most chaste, for she is the immaculate Bride of Christ, the purest of Spouses. This mother is fruitful for she has given birth to countless children for Christ and continues to do so. She is likewise the custodian of revealed truth and guardian of God's law, the protector of justice and freedom, the keeper of civilization and education, and promoter of true progress. This mother is kindhearted because the love of the Heart of Christ flows into her heart. She is holy, for her Spouse is holy. Her teaching, her law and her sacraments are holy, and her children in great number are among the company of saints and others who strive for holiness. This mother is wonderful, because upon her brow shines a golden crown interwoven with a crown of thorns. This mother is powerful and immortal, for neither sword nor time can destroy her, nor hell conquer her. O what great happiness, what honor for us that we are the children of such a mother!



DEDICATION TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS AS PROOF OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD

According to St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar's teaching, within the womb of the Immaculate Virgin the Holy Spirit formed for the Lord Jesus' human nature the most wonderful, purest, holiest and most loving Heart. The first beat of His Heart was an act of self-offering to His Heavenly Father; thus did the Lord Jesus acknowledge that He as Man does not exist of Himself and for Himself but lives only for one reason ó to offer Himself for the glory of the Father and the good of humanity. As such this is an act of the greatest love, the most complete obedience, the most profound humility, an act of perfect oblation for mankind. With every beat of His Heart, He renewed this offering throughout life and pronounced it loudly in the Garden of Olives and upon the Cross. Actually, His love found a still more astonishing way of self-emptying and self-offering in the Most Holy Mystery of the Altar.

The essence of the Christian life consists in our own self-offering to God, a self-offering which depends on our love. And yet love is impossible without this surrender to the beloved. In this self-offering to God is contained not only our sanctity but our happiness even now here on earth.

The more a person gives himself to God, ocean of happiness, the more God gives Himself to the person. To give one's self to God means to acknowledge His rule over us, to listen to Him and make Him the center of our life, placing nothing ahead of Him or equal to Him, loving all things because of Him. To give one's self perfectly to God is to serve Him not out of fear or desire for reward, but instead to give one's self solely out of pure love for Him. A devotee of the Heart of Jesus loves God ardently and desires to take Him as the one and only master of his heart. Everything else has a place in his heart only insofar as it agrees with God's design. When a person does not seek himself but seeks God

always and everywhere, even the smallest sin becomes for him a rejection of God's love.

Our self-offering to God is a renunciation and denial of self so as to live in God and for Him. There are those persons who, heedless of the fire of their trials and the battles that are burning them, will not descend from the altar of sacrifice until their entire holocaust is consumed. These are the saints. Our Lord and Savior is worthy of such sacrifice since He renounced Himself out of love for us.

Some would like to offer themselves wholly to the Heart of Jesus but for some reason are unable. Others do not want to renounce some weakness or their attachments whether to themselves, other creatures or things, justifying that such things are not yet a sin. They do not notice that such weakness impedes spiritual growth. When God would try to purify them, they obstinately resist Him by justifying themselves. Others give themselves to the Heart of Jesus, yet only within certain limits. When, the Lord demands from them greater sacrifice, placing before them a more demanding obligation or a more painful cross, they flee from it. Some persons offer to the Heart of Jesus that which they themselves choose and which is not necessarily what God wants from them. There are those too who give the Heart of Jesus sacrifices that may appear beautiful but are essentially without value, since these offerings are strongly poisoned by self-love. Finally there are others, alas many, who do not even think to offer anything to the Heart of Jesus because they totally serve the world and themselves, their only god being their own *ōlō*, their flesh or their money.



UNION WITH THE SENTIMENTS OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

In His humanity, the Lord Jesus became like us in all things but sin. Thus he also experienced our longing, joy, sorrow and sadness; however His emotions were always ordered and surrendered to His will, and were therefore stirred whenever He desired and permitted them. What is more, His emotions always included what was good and holy and were ever in conformity with the will of his Heavenly Father. All Jesus's emotions were directed solely to the glory of God and for the salvation of mankind. There was always peace within the Heart of the Savior, even during His greatest sadness in Gethsemane and on Calvary.

Human emotions carry within themselves the visible mark of original sin. They are injured, wounded and are ready to serve our senses rather than our reason. At times they are directed against God's will and cause a battle within the person, which, sad to say, sometimes even ends in great defeat. Even good emotions can harm someone if they are excessive and not subject to the power of reason.

Among the various emotions, the strongest is love. It exerts such a power over the human heart, that it can truly be said that as love goes, so goes the heart. Because of original sin, a wrongful self-love has entered into the will and heart of man as a constant self-preoccupation, a constant desire for one's own honor and affection or to secure for one's self everything that brings glory, consolation or profit, regardless of offense against God or harm to the soul. St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar warns us that under such an influence of disordered self-love, the human heart will attach itself to creatures, clinging to them like ivy to a tree, and then only the grace of God can free the heart. The feelings of such a heart are as unsettled as the waves upon a rolling sea. At times, they will raise the heart to the heights of joy and hope while at other times they will cast this same heart into an abyss of sadness and despair, such a state stirring up feelings of envy and hatred. For this reason the heart becomes

always restless and disordered like a boat tossed about by great waves, which, instead of sailing in the direction of God, instead sinks in the violent storms of sin.

In such inner turmoil, the person must turn to the Heart of God who has become his brother. Jesus has the power to bring order to our human emotions, to calm the heart's disturbance and to heal our wounds. Only the King of human hearts can help someone keep peace in the midst of that which arises within him against his will. It is God who directs human love to the right object. If the emotions become disordered there is need to acknowledge and expose such errors so as to weaken their power and obtain God's strength ó the best means being the Sacrament of Penance. We need to examine our emotions in light of the emotions and desires of the Heart of Jesus who is the image and source of perfect love. We must offer our emotions to His Heart, so that in Him, as in a furnace, our emotions may be purified and sanctified. In moments of disordered emotions, we must ask this Heart not to allow us to be led into temptation.



UNION WITH THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS IN OUR UNDERTAKINGS AND IN OUR SUFFERINGS

All the deeds of the Lord Jesus, even the smallest, were incomparably perfect and holy.

In our human endeavors there is often much that is lacking; frequently there are many defects and imperfections. Many of our acts, while regarded externally as good and beautiful, actually have no value before God. Sometimes they only arise from a wrongful intention ófor example, from the desire for vainglory and egoism. At other times there is much laziness and infidelity in fulfilling them. Yet each human endeavor should praise God, our Creator and Lord.

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar reminds us that in order to sanctify our work and daily tasks, we must have both sanctifying grace and a pure intention. We should do everything out of love for God, for the sake of His glory and for the good of others. With God's help we should fulfill everything zealously and with holy joy, doing so promptly and with an awareness of God's presence. Our increase in sanctity on earth and our glory in heaven depend upon our persevering faithfulness ó not only in great things, but in lesser matters as well.

To be perfect in all things, we must unite our life of work and prayer so that the Lord Jesus would be the beginning, the exemplar, and the end of each undertaking. Daily we should offer ourselves and all that is ours to the Most Sacred Heart of the Savior through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and repeat this act of offering especially before performing the important actions of the day. In the various times and hours of our day, we should unite ourselves with the Lord Jesus by calling to mind the events of His life, and penetrating the desires of His Heart.

Union with the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is especially needed in our trials and sufferings. Jesus Christ, King of Sorrows, has suffered immense pains so as to expiate human sin. At the same time, through His Passion, the Lord Jesus teaches us a meritorious acceptance of our

sufferings, that we would have the ability and grace to sanctify them. To this end, Jesus accepted the cross that rightfully belonged to us, and yet how often do we run from the cross! The one who refuses to accept the cross and all difficulty cannot be His disciple; who refuses to suffer can have no part in His glory. Without the cross and self-denial, there is no salvation, there is no Christ.

The Heart of Jesus teaches us to accept all our sufferings in the spirit of penance and love as the gift of God's goodness and confidence in us. In painful sadness, poverty or sickness, in moments of disappointment, humiliation and persecution, as well as in the loss of dear ones, we have identification with the life and experiences of the Lord Jesus. In everything, the Heart of Jesus understands us and desires to be Himself united with us. His Heart is closest to us in all our sufferings. Still, it depends upon us whether we will use these experiences and difficult moments of our life as a great gift, a challenge and our most favorable opportunity along our way to perfection and happiness.



UNION WITH THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS IN OUR PRAYER

From the first moment of the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit filled the Heart of Jesus with His gifts; therefore we can now draw from Its fullness. This Heart of the Son of God, open to all humanity, is the source of graces and the font of the supernatural life. St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar teaches us that each of us should be united with this Heart so as to have supernatural life within us and to be united at last with God in eternity.

First of all, we must all try to remain in a living union with the Heart of the Lord Jesus by sanctifying grace. Hence, we must take His Heart's intentions and desires as our own. Finally, we must make a complete offering of all our deeds to this Heart, asking that the Lord Jesus would live in us; that He would think, speak, work and suffer in us.

An essential element of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus was His prayer. He prayed always, especially in important moments. And all His prayers were perfect. Now, He forever prays for us. As King of glory He receives and listens to our prayers and as Mediator He understands our needs and weaknesses and presents them to His Father.

Each of us, not only as a creature and a child of God but also as a poor sinner and transgressor before Him, has the obligation before God to worship Him, thank Him, ask for forgiveness and implore His grace. In a word, each of us must pray. Unfortunately, while there are those on one side who, because they do not believe in God or think of Him, completely neglect prayer; on the other, of those who do pray, their prayers are very often full of distractions, indifference and distrust, and, what is more, their prayers are even proud or sinful at times. Is it any wonder that such prayers often resemble the offering of Cain and consequently God does not hearken to them?

In order that our prayer would be pleasing to God, we must not only pray with recollection, love, humility and persevering hope but we

must also pray in the name of Jesus, that is, in accord with His will and in union with Him. Hence, our prayer will then draw its complete strength and power from the goodness and mercy of God and from the merits of the life and the death of the Son of God. In our prayer, we should unite ourselves with the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, with His love and prayers. Then, it will not be simply one individual who prays, but the Lord Jesus Himself who is praying in and with us. In this way will our prayer become perfect and efficacious.

We begin to pray properly by recollecting ourselves and asking the Lord Jesus within us whether the intention of our prayer is in keeping with our Savior's desires. If such is our prayer, we should unite ourselves with His Heart, presenting our intention to Him, and imploring Him to make intercession for us. It is good for us also to place our prayers in the hands of the Mother of God, the Mediatrix with her Son. Then, turning to the Eternal Father, we should ask Him through the merits of all that our Divine Savior has done and suffered for us to grant us all needed graces.



THE LOVE OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS IN HIS INCARNATION AND BIRTH

The first aim of the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is to know the love of the Lord Jesus more deeply. From this deeper knowledge should flow our feelings and acts of the will, that is, our worship of this Heart, our thanksgiving and apology, love and self-offering for the sake of His intentions. By reading the Sacred Scriptures and meditating upon the life, deeds and words of the Son of God, we come to recognize the love of the Lord Jesus. Such a love revealed itself, above all, in His Incarnation and birth. As St. Joseph Sebastian writes: "The Incarnation of the Eternal Word is a mystery of incomparable humility and ineffable love. The very God unites human nature with Divinity; the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin; the Eternal is born in time; and the Infinite reveals Himself as an infant. The reason for such unfathomable humility is God's incomprehensible love - and why incomprehensible because it is infinite. The desire of the Most Holy Trinity to draw closer to His creature by means of the Incarnation of the Word, unveils an immeasurable abyss of self-emptying and love. Behold, who is God and who are we! And yet the Son of God receives our nature and unites Himself with His creation. The manner of this union reveals to us a new abyss of love. The Son of God could have come to earth clothed with majesty, with maturity of age and a glorified body; yet He came in humility, poverty and suffering. He came as an infant. He came as the child of the Virgin Mother, not only to become our brother in the flesh, but also to share with us the heart of His Mother. He came out of love for one and all. From the depths of the manger, as from a first pulpit He cries out: "Come to Me, all you who are looking for truth and light, and I will enlighten you." Whoever approaches Him with faith and inclines his ear in meditation, is the one who will hear that interior call: "Behold, O man, and see. I, the Son of

God, became a man, that you would know how good the Heavenly Father is; that you would return to Him through Me.ö

öBy His Incarnation, the Son of God became the true Emmanuel óGod living with His people, for He lived with them throughout His entire earthly life and now lives in so many tabernacles. He became our Redeemer, Savior and Mediator. He came to be our priest, our sacrifice and our life! By His Incarnation, Jesus Christ offers to His Heavenly Father through His humanity an act of the most precious homage, on behalf of all rational creatures and the whole world. From His Heart there flows an eternal hymn of glory, worship and love; only one act like this of the Incarnate Word could render greater, immeasurable glory to the Blessed Trinity than all homage offered from an infinite number of worlds possessing even millions of Angels within them! The Eternal Word exalted human nature above the choirs of Angels ó even unto the very Majesty of God, for as the soul of Jesus Christ belongs to God, His Body is the Body of God and His Heart is the Heart of God. It is not surprising then that the Angels sing to Him in Bethlehem and serve Him in the desert, that men fall to their knees before Him and that His Body and His Heart receive the praise befitting God Himself.ö



THE LOVE OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS IN HIS EARTHLY LIFE

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar teaches that the mysteries of the life and doctrine of Jesus Christ are like mines filled with Divine treasures, most of all, filled with love. öIn the Savior's earthly life there was nothing incidental or shallow in depth of meaning; instead each detail, however smallest, served as a foreshadowing, and was preordained from all ages to reveal within itself the wisdom, power and especially the love of God... To this end were all the happenings of the childhood of the Lord Jesus, even His flight into Egypt. The Lord desired by this means to console the persecuted, the alien, the poor, all without a roof over their head or without bread, and to give them a perfect example of how they should approach their lot in life.ö

The Savior's long sojourn in Nazareth sanctified family life and human labor ó even the hardest. His stay there was necessary to teach us devotion, humility, obedience and faithfulness in our daily tasks, and the Holy Family became the example for the fathers, mothers and children of all generations. All the words, deeds and miracles of the Savior, particularly those revealing the goodness and tenderness of His Heart and the love of His Father, were at once the revelation of the power and love of God. Who is there, do you suppose, who can read or listen to the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Good Shepherd, the words the Lord Jesus uttered at the Last Supper or from the cross, and remain unmoved? Who could look with indifference upon the Lord as He speaks with the Samaritan woman, forgives the sinful one, or weeps at the sight of Jerusalem's hardheartedness? In such words and signs there is hidden the incomprehensible abyss of love whose source is the Heart of the Lord.

The life of the Lord Jesus in Nazareth, together with His teaching, are proofs that it was because of us and out of love for us that He wanted to reveal Himself in daily work and relationships with those

whom He met. In this period of His life, the Lord Jesus becomes for us, above all, our Master, Physician and Consoler. Yet there are but few who will hasten to the Divine Master for the light of His truth and law. So many are the sick in soul ó like so many Lazarusø in their addictions, yet so few in number are those who would hasten to the Divine Physician for health and life; many who are unhappy and falling under the burden of the cross, but so few those who will hasten to the refreshment and relief of the Divine Comforter.

While Jesus Christ, as God-Man, did not need to prepare Himself for His public life, He still chose to do so throughout His thirty years of hidden life in Nazareth and during His forty daysø fast in the desert. By working, He always fulfilled the will of His Heavenly Father. He did all things well, for His intention was the glory of His Father and the salvation of mankind. He accepted burdens, pains and humiliations. He performed each deed with Divine perfection, and was always teaching even if this brought Him much rejection.



THE LOVE OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS IN HIS SUFFERINGS AND DEATH

The Passion of Christ is the eternal monument of the love of God, and it inspires our love toward God in return. We should meditate upon it with a living faith and love, and with the feeling of true contrition and expiation for our sins. St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar writes: òThe cross is the pulpit of the Divine Master and the book from which people learn the ways of God and the Christian virtues.ö God could have left people to their sins and rejection, deprived of the life of grace and condemned to eternal death. Indeed the people for whom the Son of God offered Himself were not faithful and grateful friends but many were even enemies to Him, bold rebels and at once ungrateful wretches who reject His truth, trample His law, despise His grace and run blindly into an abyss of ruin. Yet God not only forgave them and restored them to His friendshipó but He also made them His brothers. In this way where sin abounded, now grace even more abounds.

The love of Christ is likewise manifested in His choosing the cross as the instrument of His death whereby we could know the love of God that empties itself to the depths for us and the Divine wisdom that uses what is shameful and weak to defeat Satan and conquer the rebellious world; and by which we might perceive the justice of God that requires even the sacrifice of the cross for its satisfaction. Jesus desires that we might recognize on one hand the holiness of God and on the other, the gravity of sin óso heavy that for its remission the Son of God poured out His very Blood, so that from now on we would have no reason for excuse but would be somehow obliged even to love God who desired to redeem us through His cross.

The cross is the altar on which the High Priest fulfilled the sacrifice for the salvation of humanity. The cross is also the key, by which the Savior unlocks the heavens and the seat from which He speaks. It is also the sword by which Jesus conquered Satan and the world.

The Lord Jesus could have redeemed us with a lesser suffering yet still having infinite value, for example with but one of His tears. However, He took upon Himself all pains and humiliations and these He suffered not merely a few days but throughout His entire life. He suffered ó in poverty, in the loss of His good name, in His body and soul. He suffered from various people ó Jews and Gentiles. He even suffered on account of His Mother in seeing her beneath His cross; on account of His Heavenly Father, in His crying out from the cross: *My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mk 15:34). Jesus suffered without any consolation, without relief and yet with the greatest thirst and with the greatest love.

Could the Lord have done anything more for us? Was His love not extravagant? He has given us all things: His sufferings, blood and merits. He has given us His Mother and His very self. Indeed, He calls the whole world to deliberate: Judge between me, and the vineyard that is the human soul: What more was there that I could have done for my vineyard that I have not done? (cf. Is 5:3-4).



THE LOVE OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS IN HIS GLORIFIED LIFE

The glorified life of Christ contains many salvific events: His Resurrection, Ascension and glorious coronation in heaven, the descent of the Holy Spirit and the action of the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit. At this period of His life, the Savior continues to reveal God's great love for us. "The Lord's Resurrection," writes St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, "strengthens our love for God and neighbor. The fire of love burning within the Heart of the Lord Jesus emanated from His opened side, and coming forth with Him from the tomb, has shone throughout all the earth and through all ages, enkindling millions upon millions of human hearts. Inflamed with this fire of love, the Apostles are crying out through the lips of St. Paul: *For to me "to live" means Christ* (Phil 1:21), and they go out to all parts of the world proclaiming Christ the Lord, going forth to suffer and die for Him...The martyrs run with joy to the sword, the scaffold and the pyre. Priests, hermits and religious offer the Lord their suffering and mortification. The family is renewed by the power of Christ's teaching, for its bond has become a pure, sacrificial and unending love. Society is also renewed by it, for the Church brings fraternity and equality, and pours out upon the whole world the mercy of God."

The Lord Jesus ascended into heaven to receive the glory that was befitting His Manhood both by right of His unity with the Divinity and because of His sorrowful Passion and death. He ascended not only for Himself but also for humanity, as He wanted to make us participants in His glory. Seated at the right hand of His Father, the Lord Jesus did not stop thinking of us. He gives Himself to us constantly and completely, for His Heart, although now glorified and full of joy, has never ceased to love us. Even in heaven the Lord Jesus belongs fully to us. He is our Mediator, who, implores mercy for us by showing His Heavenly Father His wounds and pierced Heart, The Lord Jesus, especially through the hands of the Most Blessed Virgin, bestows

heavenly gifts upon earth and grants them through the ministry of His Church. As King and Ruler, He leads us through the battles of life and fortifies our weak, human strength. He is the Judge who as long as we live will administer over us in the Sacrament of Penance His judgment of mercy and justice, yet who after our death will exercise the judgment of justice alone. Jesus, the Mediator, is ever awaiting us that we would implore the Father for forgiveness and graces through His Heart. Such is the surest way to gain heaven.

ōLong for heaven, ōSt. Joseph Sebastian teaches us, ōfly to the Lord as on wings, and never lose your peace. Cease not to work for the glory of God and the salvation of your soul until the Lord decides to say: -It is time.ø Remember that here you have no lasting city, but are awaiting another. Live then like the traveler or exile who, on returning to the fatherland, takes only what is necessary from earth. And yet collect heavenly treasures zealously. Through the Immaculate hands of Mary, entrust all your merits to the Heart of the Lord Jesus.ö



THE LOVE OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS REVEALED IN THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST

According to St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, the Lord Jesus, returning to His Heavenly Father, left us not only His teaching, grace and law, but bequeathed to us also His Church, His Mother, and, above all, Himself. In the Most Holy Mystery of the Altar He found a mysterious and miraculous way of dwelling with us. He descended to the lowest step of the ladder of humiliation, veiling not only His Divinity under the sacramental species but also His humanity. Even if we were to have the wisdom of all angels and the hearts of all saints, we would still not be able to comprehend or thank Him enough for this love. The Most Blessed Sacrament is truly the ōmiracle of miraclesö that the Lord Jesus continually brings about in order to remain with us. It is the crown of God's mysteries and His works, since it is the culmination of the love that the Lord Jesus has shown in the mystery of His Incarnation, His earthly life and institution of the Church. In this way the Lord Jesus remains upon earth until the end of ages, because *loving His own in the world, He loved them to the end* (Jn 13:1). In the Most Blessed Sacrament the love of His Heart reaches its summit.

The Lord Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist, above all, for this purpose, namely to re-present in an unbloody manner the sacrifice of the cross upon our altars. Through this mystery, the Lord Jesus is present upon our altars during Holy Mass and remains hidden in so many tabernacles under the sacramental species, everywhere alive, everywhere in His fullness. The Lord Jesus instituted this Sacrament for this purpose too, namely, to be as heavenly food that comes down to us to strengthen us, sanctify us and unite us with Himself, and so transform us into Himself.

The Heart of the Lord Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament ever remains the seat of mercy, treasury of graces, the fire of holy ardor and school of virtues. The Divine Heart, the Eucharistic Heart of the Lord

Jesus, is worthy of ardent gratitude, worship and love. It has been said beautifully that there is a double bond connected in this mystery: one, descending from heaven to earth, which is the desire of God for us; and the other, rising from earth to heaven in our longing for God.

The Heart of Jesus, present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, the Heart of our High-Priest, Friend and Father, beats with ineffable love. At the same time how ungratefully people repay such love! From the depths of the Eucharistic sanctuary is heard this complaint: *How long must I remain with you? How long can I endure you?* (Mt 17:17).

“Oh do not allow that the Lord would complain about you as well,” writes St. Joseph Sebastian. “Pray, and take care that the object of your eager desire will be your daily participation in Holy Mass, your visit each day to the Most Blessed Sacrament, your frequent and worthy reception of Holy Communion and your devout participation in Eucharistic celebrations — that thus may every act of yours may be united with this Mystery.”

Try to zealously make acts of expiation for the many insults and much ingratitude shown to this loving Heart.



THE IMITATION OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Even in the Old Testament, God had said clearly to the people: *Be holy for I am holy* (Lev 11:44). But how could a sinful person with a fallen nature become a saint? Behold, the love of God has come with His assistance, for the Son of God, consubstantial with the Father, became a man like us in all things but sin. By this we can recognize in Him the very life of God and, by imitating Him, can become like the Heavenly Father.

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar teaches that to imitate the Lord Jesus means to follow in His footsteps. It means to think, desire, speak, act and suffer as Christ did. In such a way, we, as much as possible, live the life of Jesus. The sanctification of each moment of our life depends upon our union with the Lord Jesus. We can attain to the purpose of our life by means of the example, grace and help that the Lord Jesus gives to us in Himself and, at the same time, provides for the needs of our human frailty.

To follow Christ is a great privilege. If the soldiers of a great military leader are proud that they can fight under his command, how much greater the honor for Christians that their Ruler, Jesus Christ, goes before them with the cross upon His shoulders, leading them to victory. Where Jesus is, there is freedom, peace and holy joy; in a word, there is heaven on earth. He is not only a Guide but also a Helper. Everyone who approaches Him can say: *My help comes from the Lord* (Ps 121:2). He helps us to carry our crosses in our procession to Calvary. He lifts us up from our falls, wipes the sweat from our brow, and heals our wounds with His balm. Jesus allows us also to sit awhile in the shade of His consolation, pointing to heaven, as if to say, “Courage! Onward, My servant! I myself trod this road, followed by my most beloved Mother and hosts of others. As for you, go perseveringly, and you shall receive the unfading crown of glory.”

To imitate the Heart of Jesus we must purify our hearts from sin, from any inordinate desires and from vanity and earthly clamor. The

frequent and worthy reception of the holy Sacraments, our daily examination of conscience, our vigilance and resolute working upon ourselves, joined to our fervent prayer, are the necessary means to follow the Lord Jesus. They allow us entrance into the Lord's Heart, into His plans, desires and aspirations. And all of this, that we may take upon ourselves His desires and form our hearts after the Heart of Jesus. To follow Christ we should constantly learn about Him, continually listen to Him, read and meditate upon Him. Above all, we should love the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, for love unites us with Christ and urges us to follow Him faithfully. This love allows the soul to enter into the sanctuary of the Heart of God, thus does its sight become clearer than the vision of faith.

Looking upon the Heart of Jesus with the eyes of love, try to imitate this Heart especially in your love for God and people, in meekness, humility, obedience, self-denial, dedication and the spirit of prayer.



THE COMMANDMENT OF LOVE

Love is the desire of the human heart and its very life. The commandment to love both God and neighbor is the Divine Heart's covenant of love. *You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Mt 22:37.39). Such is the way commanded us by the Divine Master and highest Lawgiver, writes St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, and is also enjoined on us by the mind, enlightened by faith, which teaches us that we are all children of the one Father in heaven and at the same time are members of one great family and brothers among ourselves...Our love of neighbor is the measure of our love for God. There is a close connection between the two. They are like two streams flowing from one spring, like two flames from one fire, such that one cannot exist without the other. The love of neighbor is the characteristic of true Christians. It is the most beloved virtue of Christ. The Savior not only gave us this commandment, but by His life also taught us how to fulfill it.

In the Cenacle on the eve of His Passion, the Lord Jesus repeated the commandment of love for neighbor: *I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you.* (Jn 13:34). And how did He love us? Even before we were able to know Him and to respond to His love, He first loved us. The Lord Jesus loved those who were unworthy of His love and who would often repay Him with ungratefulness. Jesus loves us with a most tender love, and this, the love of a father, brother, friend and spouse. He has loved us to the point of pouring Himself out for us. He has endured for us all suffering, bitterness and the shame of the cross. Jesus gave Himself completely to us. He has loved us to the end.

Despite our human mistakes and ingratitude, the Lord Jesus does not break our friendship with Him. In a like manner, we too must love our neighbor. St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar develops this thought using

the canvas of St. Paul's hymn on love. Such a love should be pure, not self-interested; it must be persistent and extending to all, even our enemies. It is to be expressed in thought, heart, word and deed. Thus, it avoids suspicion and rash judgments, does not exclude anyone but rather respects others because of God. This love allows us to respect our neighbor as a creature of God and to see in him the image of the Creator. We further see in him a child of the Heavenly Father, a temple of the Holy Trinity and above all a brother and friend of Christ. True love for neighbor avoids hatred and the desire for revenge; it repels any aversion and duplicity. Moreover, it forgives injury and is undeterred by unkind words; it guards against antipathy or our acting upon the caprices of the heart. True love is led by the spirit of faith and Christian love. The person nurturing within himself the love of neighbor, guards against hardness of heart and envy; he wishes others well and rejoices in their happiness. He avoids slander, so common and damaging a fault. The speech of love is true yet delicate; kind but without hypocrisy; sweet yet without flattery; finally it is meek and gracious but without exaggeration. The one who loves neither hurts his neighbor nor consciously and willfully causes him any pain, rather he works zealously for his benefit and salvation.



MERCY ACCORDING TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

St. Luke has written in reminding us of the Lord Jesus' sermon about having a practical love for our enemies: *Be merciful as your Father is merciful* (Lk 6:36). Mercy that meets the spiritual and temporal needs of others is our Christian duty, and must be the norm of the disciples of Christ. and yet of itself it principally belongs to the natural disposition of the human heart.

“God has formed the human heart,” St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar writes, “in a such way, that it increases in nobility, peace, consolation and power in proportion to its compassion and mercy shown to others. Also sometimes one of our noble deeds will serve as the means for our conversion or sanctification.” Moreover, the good of the believer requires fulfilling deeds of mercy, for their fruits also are inestimable. Nothing draws as many souls to God as does mercy joined to mortification and suffering. The testimony that is most eloquent is that of our deeds and sacrifices. In such manner, mercy becomes a sign of zeal for God's glory and the building up of the Church.

Mercy is shown above all by our practical love of neighbor. First of all, this means the preservation and pursuit of justice. “Do no harm to your neighbor,” writes St. Joseph Sebastian, “rather do him as much good as you are able.” Such is demanded of us by our intellect and heart, likewise by justice and society, since humanity is one great family, one great body in which individual members should care for one another and bring real help to all.

Mercy is needed especially for those who are spiritually suffering. To be ignorant of doctrine, to suffer anxiety and sadness, to have a lack of faith and grace, to experience sin and the punishment for sin, are great spiritual sufferings. They are more painful than bodily sufferings therefore do they need greater mercy. One who loves God cannot look indifferently at how those are perishing for whom Christ

shed His Blood. The rescue of sinners means to cooperate with God for the salvation of people. The hidden apostolate is a sacrificial offering most pleasing to God, since God chose to save people, and this, also through others. How then are we to help those who are suffering like this? To not spare our pains and sacrifices in our work for their conversion; to pray for the wandering; to offer up our own crosses; to be a good example, a thing most effective; and also to admonish in an appropriate way. These are the ways to be of help.

Mercy also demands our obedience and gratitude to God. We receive everything from God, and, through us, God desires to show forth His Heart toward the many who are needy. Mercy is an imitation of the example of Christ who became mercy to the beggars and bread to the hungry. To the thirsty He comes as the source of grace, to the sick He comes not only as the physician but as the medicine as well. He is consoler to the suffering and shepherd to those who stray. Whoever fulfills mercy imitates Christ and becomes like a merciful God to his neighbor and an instrument of divine Providence.



THE HEART OF THE GOD-MAN

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar writes, "What can be more wonderful in heaven or on earth, what more worthy of honor and love, than the Heart of the God-Man and thus the Heart of Supreme Wisdom, of holiness itself and infinite love, the Heart of our Creator... Savior í King í Friend í Brother í and Father.õ"

This Heart is the most perfect of God's masterpieces, encompassing within itself the ineffable treasures of God's wisdom and love. This Heart is the seat of the holiest emotions, the school of the noblest virtues, the exemplar and font of sanctity. The Lord Jesus, being God-Man, has two wills, and therefore has a twofold love: Divine and human. This Divine love is infinite since it is an attribute of the divine nature belonging to the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. Who can comprehend it? No one can even put into words the human love of the Savior. It is higher than the heavens, deeper than the ocean, wider than the universe and longer than eternity. If we would combine the love of all the Apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins, in a word, of all the saints who throughout the ages adorned God's Church; if we would gather all the ardent desires and enclose them in one heart; adding to it the whole ardor with which the choir of Angels burns toward their God; if we would crown all these with the marvelous fire that burns within the Immaculate Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God, we will then see only a faint reflection of the love the Lord Jesus has toward each one of us, regardless of our malice and unworthiness.

In the Bethlehem manger, this love shone with an ineffable radiance, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten one, that this Son of God - taking upon Himself a human body from the Immaculate Virgin Mary, could manifest Himself as an infant in swaddling clothes. This love was even more radiantly revealed on the cross. Thus, did not the Savior say: *There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends* (Jn 15: 13), and He Himself gave His

life for His enemies, that is, for sinners. However it was not enough for the love of the Lord Jesus that He has offered Himself upon the altar of the cross. He desired to remain with us at every moment until the end of the ages and thus He allowed Himself to be locked in churches as the prisoner of love. The Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is the summit of the love of the God-Man. According to the words of St. Augustine, God, although most wise, knew not how to give more; though most powerful, was not able to give more; though richest, had nothing more to give. He could demand that we build for Him temples of marble and jewels and yet He does not disdain even the poorest of churches, if only human hearts would resemble His Heart that is full of love. This Most Sacred Heart, reigning now upon a throne of glory in the glorified Humanity of Christ, is the throne, center, and sign as well of His Divine and human love.

O what great happiness that in our churches, both day and night, the Lord dwells in all His power and in all His love!



THE HEART OF OUR MOST BELOVED SPOUSE

Receiving holy baptism, the soul opens itself to the love of God. At the same time the Lord Jesus becomes the Spouse of the soul and the soul is made His bride. He espouses the soul with the ring of union with Himself; introduces the soul to His home, that is, the Church; allows participation in His treasures on earth and afterward in His Kingdom in heaven. He does this under the condition that the bride will remain faithful to Him.

“Oh, how great your dignity, O human soul,” St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar writes, “that you have such a Spouse whose beauty the sun and moon admire. Arise and know how great you are in the eyes of God. Christ, your Spouse, did not spare His blood for you; He bountifully made you rich; He shared with you His Kingdom and raised you to His throne. See how much you should love Him; what ardent thanks you should offer Him; and how faithful you should be to Him in everything.”

The Lord Jesus became the Bridegroom of all. In Him we find the strongest love and support, the surest advice and consolation. He is the example and author of a life both chaste and wholly dedicated to God. Not only is the God-Man alone the purest, but He loves chastity in us as well. He chose for His Mother the Immaculate Virgin; He loved above all others the virgin disciple John; and lastly He recommended virginity as a counsel and means to perfection. Moreover, to all who love chastity, the Lord Jesus gives a bountiful reward and the beatitude of seeing God.

We can say of the religious life that it is similar to the marriage resulting from the wedding vows. Therefore we rightly call religious profession a marriage with Jesus Christ. Entrusting his heart to the bride, the bridegroom eagerly shares with her his goods also. Similarly, the Lord Jesus shares with the person given to Him in religious consecration not only His truth, His grace, His merits, His Mother, and the gifts placed

within the treasury of the Church, but He also gives Himself to her in order to transform her into His very self. He asks only our faithful and lasting love, which He promises to abundantly reward in His Kingdom.

Whoever responds to this bridal love of Jesus by undertaking the evangelical counsels, may experience the paradox that confounds others. Renouncing his own will through obedience, he gains true freedom in God. Renouncing the disposal of material goods for the care of the interior life, he is filled with the inexhaustible treasures of God's grace. Finally, taking the vow of chastity opens him to the wider perspective of complete union with God in love.

By the grace of God, millions of priests, hermits, religious men and women and lay people as well have kept and are keeping chastity. They imitate in this life the chaste, poor and obedient Lord Jesus. He Himself gave these counsels so as to remove the greatest obstacles from those who would embrace them, while at the same time giving the means for resemblance to Him and the way to draw near to Him.

Blessed are the single-hearted for they shall see God (Mt 5:8).



THE HEART OF THE MOST FAITHFUL FRIEND

In our life we sometimes feel alone and abandoned. We desire to have someone close who would be a support, help and consolation. The Holy Scripture calls such a faithful friend a treasure that not everyone finds (cf. Eccl 6:14). St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar writes, "The Lord Jesus is such a friend to everyone, especially in the Most Blessed Sacrament. During His earthly life, the Lord Jesus loved everyone infinitely, yet His Heart was not indifferent to the human sentiments of friendship towards some. By this He wanted to give us an example of what kind of friendship we should keep and what this friendship entails."

Among His chosen friends were, above all, His disciples, whom He kept close to Him throughout three years and whom He not only taught but also endured and sanctified. During the Last Supper He said to them openly: *I no longer speak of you as slaves, for a slave does not know what his master is about. Instead, I call you friends, since I have made known to you all that I heard from my Father (Jn 15:15).* Among those He called friend were Lazarus from Bethany, Peter and James who accompanied Him on Mount Tabor, and John who to whom He entrusted His Mother from the cross.

When He ascended into heaven, He did not cease to be a friend to all, especially to those who believe in Him, trust Him and love Him. For them, He remains on earth a prisoner of love in so many tabernacles, and desires to be united most intimately with them. In holy baptism the Lord Jesus admits the soul to union with Himself. Later, He strengthens and perfects this friendship whenever the Christian receives Him devoutly in Holy Communion.

He is a sincere friend in that He desires not his own benefits, but our true good. He is a noble friend, since He shares everything with us, and not only gives His life for us, but even gives His very self as food. He is a tender friend, because He never abandons us unless we ourselves reject Him. But if we do so, He draws close to us, seeking our

reconciliation with Himself. If we shed but one tear of sincere contrition, but, with confession cry out: I have sinned, but, do Thou, O Lord, forgive me! He immediately forgets even the gravest transgressions and restores us to His friendship. The Lord Jesus is a faithful friend, since He accompanies us at each step of our life to support us in our work, shield us in battle, console us in suffering, and lift us up when we fall. He accompanies us to the very end, until with His assistance we happily enter that eternal realm where Jesus bestows His glory and satisfies us with His happiness.

Consider that the goodness and tenderness of this Friend is shown especially when He consoles the afflicted ó for example at the wedding at Cana, or when He is approached by the Canaanite woman; when He raises Lazarus from the dead and consoles his two sisters; or when in Naim He restores a young man to life, thus taking pity on a mother's tears. This Friend does not even abandon us at the final and sometimes great agony at our moment of death.



THE HEART OF THE MASTER, OUR SHEPHERD AND GUIDE

The Apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus saw in Him their good Teacher and Master. They were full of admiration for His teaching and power, but especially for the virtues that radiated from His Person. Above all, they held Him in the highest esteem since there was also no contradiction between His teaching and His way of life. They were in awe of the inexhaustible love He showed them and to all whom He met. They also felt intuitively that the power of His love exceeded their greatest expectations in this regard.

Closer to our times, St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, disciple and apostle of the Heart of Jesus presents us not only with what is taken from the tradition of the ages but also draws upon what he himself found. He writes that Jesus Christ, while even still in the womb of Mary, by his life was teaching us to love obedience, recollection, silence and mortification. In the manger He showed us surrender, poverty of spirit, humility and meekness. Later, in His earthly life, He was continually giving examples of sacrifice and entrustment to Divine Providence. In Nazareth and Jerusalem during His boyhood, He taught us how to advance in goodness, how to love religious observance and customs, and how to live a hidden life of obedience, devotion and hard work. As He grew up, He was giving us the example of perfect prayer, of how to combat Satan and to fight the temptations of the flesh, the world and the pride of life.

The Lord Jesus became the Master because He brought God's truth and proclaimed it by His life and His words. He taught it with great respect and love, as well as with clarity, accommodating Himself to His listeners and often using parables. In many places and situations He also spoke by His very demeanor to those mentioned in the Gospel. He has spoken clearly by His Passion and death; likewise, through His glorious life and by remaining with us in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Today the

Lord Jesus teaches His truth and Divine life ó from the lips of His Church and by His presence in the most holy mystery of the Altar.

The Heart of the Lord Jesus is also the exemplar and Master since it is the school of all virtues. In It, the inexperienced can learn a holy life, and especially love, for it was out of love that this Heart has sacrificed Himself upon the cross and continues to sacrifice Himself in the Sacrament of the Altar. He calls out to us: *Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart* (Mt 11:29). The Heart of Jesus is at once purest and holiest. It is meek and sweet, merciful and sensitive. It burns with zeal for the Father's glory and our salvation. It reveals itself as humble, patient and obedient unto death.

Jesus Christ is also our best Shepherd and Guide to heaven. He penetrates the hidden matters of the human heart and draws His sheep to Himself. He seeks them out in the wilderness, carries them in His arms, and feeds them with His very self.

The Lord Jesus, our Guide, is at once our best Counselor. If we come to Him with trust and ask, "Lord Jesus, direct me," He immediately responds to us.

To receive light in all doubts and difficult situations, knock at the Heart of your Shepherd, hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and call as well upon the intercession of our Mother of Good Counsel.



THE HEART OF THE KING

The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus can also be called the feast of Christ, King of the Universe since the reign of the Divine Heart is based upon true love. The preface for this day expresses it beautifully, speaking about the Kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace.

St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar teaches that as God-Man and King of heaven, the Lord Jesus lowered His royal majesty, took upon Himself the form of a servant and emptied Himself unto death on the cross. Now all the hosts of Angels and Saints humbly bow before Him and sing an endless hymn of glory.

The Lord Jesus is King of the earth. All people are subject to His authority and, if not in life, then after death they must bend the knee before Him. Unseen, He rules in His Kingdom that is the Church, thus the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.

The Lord Jesus is the victorious King who conquers the kingdom of Satan, for He has vanquished his gates, and by His death He has conquered the prince of darkness.

Jesus Christ is also King of the Church Suffering, that is, of the souls in Purgatory who endure their torments as the temporal punishment they did not expiate during their life. The Lord Jesus has pity upon the souls who are there. "Without a doubt," St. Joseph Sebastian writes, "these souls, uniting themselves with the Church Triumphant and Militant, adore their Savior and King, present on the Altar and in our tabernacles." He permits us on earth to help the souls in Purgatory by our prayers, almsgiving, good deeds, fasting, mortification, and, above all, by the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass. This gracious King permits that we recommend our needs to their prayers, all of us who are continuing on the path to His Kingdom.

The Lord Jesus as Lord and Creator is King to all people, but especially of Christians. The soul, heart and conscience of Christians must be completely surrendered to the rule of Christ the King. St. Joseph

Sebastian Pelczar writes: "Through holy baptism the Lord Jesus becomes King of the soul, and the soul becomes His Kingdom. The soul, therefore, declares through the lips of the godparents that it renounces the kingdom of Satan and surrenders itself totally under the scepter of Jesus Christ. From this time forward the soul will be ruled by His principles, listen to His commandments and offer Him due sacrifice. Joy to the soul, who throughout its entire life, fulfills this promise and never rebels against its King, or who after each transgression will return immediately to God's grace. In such a soul the Lord Jesus reigns completely, and His Kingdom is a Kingdom of light, for, with Jesus, trust, love and patience enter the human heart. This Kingdom is also the Kingdom of freedom, for wherever He reigns there is a holy freedom. It is also the Kingdom of glory because He makes His servants kings." Each Christian is the friend of the Heavenly King whom the Lord honors with His great mark of confidence. If one would be great, powerful and glorious, more than any king or monarch in the world, then wholly surrender to the dominion of the King of the kings, who is Jesus Christ the Lord.



THE HEART OF THE MOST TENDER FATHER

From the creation of the world, God has shown Himself to be a Father to the whole human family, but in a special way towards His chosen people. Nevertheless, it was only the Lord Jesus who brought to earth the most joyful news: that God is our best Father. He knows what we need and what is good for us. God the Father cares for us incomparably more than other creature, and He loves us infinitely. The Heart of the Son of God was always most closely united to His Heavenly Father. This was shown especially in His prayer in Gethsemane.

Jesus Christ not only taught about His Father but He also showed Himself to be the best Father to us. With what great love He taught the ignorant, healed the weak, consoled the afflicted and fed the hungry with spiritual and earthly bread. In the parables of the Good Shepherd, the lost sheep and the prodigal son, the Lord Jesus revealed the depths of His Heart filled with love toward sinners and the desire for their conversion. Longing to give His children supernatural and eternal life, He died for them, enduring the most horrible pains and insults. Can there be any greater love? He has loved us to the end, to the end of the ages, and beyond all measure, for He has remained among His children — remaining not simply in one place, Palestine, but remaining upon all the altars in so many churches. He remained not in the radiance of glory as on Mount Tabor, but clothed Himself instead in the garment of the greatest humiliation, so as not to terrify His children, but rather by meekness to draw them to Himself. He remained with us, although foreseeing that many of His ungrateful children would reject and even insult Him. Jesus stayed not only to live among His children in churches but also to visit them in their homes and to enter their souls. O Lord, how good a Father you are! Truly, you have kept the promise that you made to us at the Last Supper: *Do not let your hearts be troubled (Jn 14:1). I will not leave you orphaned (Jn 14:18).*

For the sake of His children, this Father has built a great home of the Catholic Church, with which He has supplied everything that serves their good and salvation, that is, light, warmth and nourishment. He lives and acts continually in this home; He governs this home; and He protects this home that the waves of the ages will not carry it off or fill it with error or sin. As our Father, the Lord Jesus is providing food for us His children, since He has left in His home the spiritual bread of the bread of truth and bread of Sacrament of which will never be wanting.

The Heart of the Father loves all children although He does not provide for them all in the same way. Those who serve Him faithfully or try to serve Him better, He exalts and showers with supernatural gifts and sweetness, as we see in the lives of so many Saints. Unfortunately, there are also blind children who run from Him and thereby perish forever out of hunger. Oh, how His Heart grieves over them!

Relying on the omnipotence and goodness of God, trust God in everything and throughout your entire life; and affectionately nestle upon this Heart. This Heart is the throne of mercy from which we can always hear: *Come, all you, to me* (Mt 11:28).



THE APOSTOLATE AS THE EXPRESSION OF OUR LOVE FOR THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

The Christian who truly strives for perfect love for the Lord Jesus is one who is overcome with ardent devotion for His Heart, shares His aspirations and desires, and strives with all his strength that they may be fulfilled. What then are these desires of the Heart of Jesus who is reigning now in glory and is hidden in the Sacred Mystery of the Altar?

As in His earthly life, so now also He desires glory for His Heavenly Father and the salvation of mankind. This is the reason why the Son of God took upon Himself a human body, why He lived hidden in Nazareth and publicly proclaimed the Good News. For this purpose He also instituted the sacrament of the priesthood, died upon the cross and remained with us in the Most Blessed Sacrament. The Heart of Jesus ardently desires that His Church would be spread to all nations throughout the whole world and would embrace all centuries. He desires that His Church would live and grow in peace, and would enlighten and sanctify all people. Everything that helps the Church in fulfilling its mission is dear to the Heart of Jesus. In this task, what is most necessary and helpful for the Church is: the submission in faith to the Holy Father, the holiness and zeal of priests and religious, the just government of people, the propagation of missions and the development of charitable works of mercy and the various Catholic organizations.

True devotees and lovers of the Heart of Jesus assume His aspirations and desires. They not only strive eagerly for their own sanctification alone but become apostles of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus as well. St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar urges: "Brothers and sisters in Christ, especially you fathers and mothers of families, you should watch that your children be holy and that each of your homes become a domestic Church. All of you should remain beneath the banner of the cross, close to your bishops and priests. All of you should be Catholic in spirit and in truth and, at the same time, must work for the sanctification

of your families. Participate in Catholic organizations and activities, and do not push Catholic-social action only onto the priests and a few volunteers...There are not many with strong Catholic norms who are always and everywhere faithful to them in private and public life, at home and school, in government and everywhere else. There are not many with an ardent heart who will identify with the joys and sufferings of the Church, and who, for every religious cause will be ready to sacrifice. There are not many with an apostolic spirit who, grateful for their grace of faith, try to draw others to God.ö

There is also a great number of half-hearted and lukewarm Christians who remove themselves from the life of the Church and avoid priests and going to church. There are many who serve only the gods of the modern world, namely, pleasure, riches and vainglory. The task, now, for the apostles of the Divine Heart and to which the love of God compels them, is to enkindle the spirit of Christ in human hearts.



THE MEANS AND WAYS OF THE APOSTOLATE OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Whoever would like to be called a devotee and lover of the Heart of Jesus, beholding this Heart, must work as much as possible to increase God's glory upon earth. Zeal for the glory of God should be our first care and daily task. As St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar says, following from St. John Chrysostom: öIf we seek only our own gain, we live in the world in vain. Be therefore like the industrious worker in what refers directly to God's glory and increases it upon earth.ö

The lover of the Heart of Jesus desires also the salvation of others. First of all, the love of God compels him. He who loves God and wants to please Him shares the Divine intention and is concerned for its fulfillment. The example of Christ urges Him on to care for each person, knowing that the price of salvation is immeasurable. Moreover the person is a royal work of God, more precious than the whole world. Each person's worth is as much as the Blood of the Savior. Whoever participates and supports the priests in their pastoral work, gives great joy to the Heart of Jesus. St. John Chrysostom says even that whoever will convert but one sinner is more pleasing to the Lord than the one who gives all his possession to the poor. The source of such an apostolate proceeds from zeal for the glory of God, care for the salvation of people and the good of the Church. These only can impel us to action to fulfill God's great plans.

The apostolate of the Heart of Jesus is realized through prayer, penance, suffering, sacrifice and deeds. The Heart of Jesus ardently desires a prayerful intercession, therefore the true apostle prays eagerly and frequently for the intentions of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. A true apostle of this Heart also spreads His Kingdom through penance and suffering. He makes expiation not only for his own sins but for those of others as well. The crosses that the Lord sends him, he carries eagerly and courageously so that God will be honored. A true apostle of the

Heart of Jesus contributes to His glory by spiritual and material gifts that help toward the educational and charitable work of the Church. He works also, as his state of life and abilities allow him, to spread faith and devotion in individuals, families and society. He conscientiously fulfills his obligations yet at the same time works for the sanctification of those around him. He gives testimony to his faith before unbelievers or those indifferent in their faith. He distributes valuable books, magazines and films. Having access to the mass media, he makes use of it to spread truthful information and good and to defend moral and religious values.

He cares for the fainthearted, the abandoned and those lost in life. In a word, the apostle of the Heart of Jesus does as much good as he can, and does not seek in it his own gain. He does all this in union with the Church and strives interiorly for meekness, courage, prudence and wholehearted love for neighbor.

Such apostles of the Heart of Jesus, full of renunciation, dedication and zeal ó how much we need them today!