



## *Eucharistic Heart of Jesus- source of love, source of healing*

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*by a Visitation Sister*

*December 2004*

Dear Friends of the Heart of Christ,

When I am privileged to prepare these talks on Sacred Heart Spirituality, and before I choose my theme, I take some time to ponder the particular month and season in which I am to give the talk, the saints surrounding the date of the talk, the stresses and tensions in the world at the time, so that I can link all of this with the Sacred Heart for our day. This time though the Church herself has clearly set before me the topic. How so? Our beloved Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has designated this year from October 2004 to October 2005 as the "Year of the Eucharist". Yes, I mused, the Eucharist is certainly Sacred Heart Spirituality at its most intense, its most real, its most sacred! And as if to confirm my choice of topic, let me share with you a few lines I read shortly afterwards. "Devotion to the Sacred Heart should bring us to a life of intimate union with Jesus who, we know, is truly present and living in the Eucharist.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart touches, as it were, the mainspring of all the mysteries of the Redeemer. It focuses in on the love of the Heart of Jesus, which explains the Incarnation; the life, passion and death of Jesus; the Eucharist." (*Divine Intimacy* by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen o.c.d.) We cannot possibly understand these mysteries if we do not first ponder God's love. Oh how blessed are we to be able to contemplate the Heart of Jesus as the symbol of His infinite love and also to find Him always near us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist! When we honor the Sacred Heart we are honoring the One who lives eternally in heaven, and on earth wherever the Eucharist is reserved. Our Lord has said "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world". (Mt. 28:20).

We can say that the Eucharist holds within it all the riches of our salvation in Christ. The mystery of the Eucharist having been instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper was celebrated from the very beginning by the early Church. Therefore, for a brief moment, let us look at the historical setting of what is called the Last Supper.

"There is no doubt that Jesus' last meal took place in the atmosphere of the paschal feast commemorating the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt. Jesus made use of this setting to institute the new covenant; thus taking the old rite and transforming it. We are in the course of a meal, a religious meal, in which the food received a liturgical efficacy. In the old covenant paschal meal, the sharing in the bitter herbs, the



unleavened bread and the lamb, formed the essential rite. More than a simple commemoration accompanied by a family feast, it was the means by which they associated themselves, as physically as possible, with the events of the Exodus and the wonderful 'Deliverance' which the ever-living God continued to offer to His people. The words which the father of the family spoke over these various dishes to explain their significance gave them in some way a new power; so much so that, by eating them, the people at table profited anew and in a personal way from the favors received by their forefathers. We can expect no less from the new rite that Jesus grafted on to the old pasch. In fact we can expect even more because of the totally new fact of the Incarnation and Redemption."

*(The Accounts of the Institution of the Eucharist and What They Imply by P. Benoit  
o.p.)*

Jesus sets before His apostles the events that were about to occur. He tells them of His upcoming death, but promises to be with them until the end of time. In the breaking of the bread, in the blessing of the wine 'I am present', He says to them. These words of Jesus make sense only after Good Friday though. Thus we read in Saint Matthew's Gospel: "During the meal Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples. 'Take this and eat it,' He said, 'this is my body.' Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. 'All of you must drink from it,' He said, 'for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of Me'." (Mt 26:26-28)

"At every celebration of the Eucharist, we are spiritually brought back to the paschal triduum: to the events of the evening of Holy Thursday, to the Last Supper and to what followed it. The institution of the Eucharist sacramentally anticipated the events which were about to take place. The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but captures the heart of the mystery of the Church. The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is 'the source and summit of the Christian life'. For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ Himself, our Passover and living Bread. The sacramental representation of Christ's sacrifice in the Mass involves a most special presence which, in the words of Pope Paul VI, 'is called Real not as a way of excluding all other types of presence as if they were not real, but because it is a presence in the fullest sense'. The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift – however precious – among so many others but as the gift par excellence, for it is the gift of Himself, of His person in His sacred humanity as well as the gift of His saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past but transcends all time. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and the



work of our redemption is carried out. The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. The sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice. It is in the reception of Holy Communion that the saving efficacy of the sacrifice is realized fully, for we receive within us the very One who offered Himself for us. Before this mystery of love human reason fully experiences its limitations. Truly the Eucharist is a *mysterium fidei*, a mystery which surpasses our understanding and can only be received in faith." (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II)

It is so important for our spiritual well-being to realize that in order for us to grow from the outpouring of the infinite love and mercy flowing from the Eucharist, we need to actively or rather *faith-filledly* participate. We need to invite Jesus in. "We need to be", as Father Thomas Daily o.s.f.s. expresses it, "in communion even before we receive Communion". "When we receive Holy Communion our heart must be enlarged by love, so that it will be wide open for the coming of Jesus and ready to let itself be transformed by Him. Each Communion brings us a new increase of grace and charity; but even this increase will be in proportion to our capacity for receiving it. We can and should dispose ourselves, both by asking for this grace in humble trusting prayer and by an active practice of faith. Faith is a voluntary adherence of the intellect to revealed truth. Thus we can make acts of faith whenever we wish. The more intense our faith, the more it will appear in our attitude toward the Blessed Sacrament". (*Divine Intimacy*) Let us cultivate this attitude of faith and love so that the words of our Lord to Saint Maria Faustina may not apply to us. "It pains Me very much when souls receive the Sacrament of Love merely out of habit, as if they did not distinguish this food". (*Diary of St. Maria Faustina of the Blessed Sacrament*)

And with this deepening of our faith, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass simply flows. "Our hearts are restless till they rest in Jesus", says Saint Augustine. And this is exactly one of adoration's purposes. We are awed by what is before us, by Who is before us; and our hearts rest in this relationship, in this living encounter with the Real, with the Sacred, with God. We should return often, at least in spirit, to the Tabernacle to keep ourselves in contact with the Eucharist. Thanks be to God many parishes are opening Adoration Chapels. Let us avail ourselves of this gift! And, dear friends of the Heart of Christ, we are indeed blessed to believe "for the Heart of Jesus is always living in the Eucharist to satisfy the hunger of all who long for Him, to welcome and console all those who, disillusioned by the vicissitudes of life take refuge in Him, seeking peace and refreshment", [hope and healing]. "Jesus Himself is our support on the hard road of life. It is impossible to eliminate sorrow from our life; yet if we live for Jesus we can suffer in peace and find in the Heart of Jesus repose for our weary soul." (*Divine Intimacy*)



In the humble signs of bread and wine changed into His body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, and He enables us to become for others witnesses of hope. If in the presence of this mystery reason experiences its limits, the heart, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, clearly sees the response that is demanded and bows low in adoration and unbounded love.” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*)

Let us strive to be signs of hope and sources of healing not just this day, not just during the “Year of the Eucharist” but daily. Let us spend more time with our Lady as we pray:  
”Heart of Jesus ever present in the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar I believe in You”.

May Jesus ever live anew in our hearts and in our weary, war-torn, wounded world.