



## WITNESSES OF THE SACRED HEART

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*by Sister Miriam Rose*

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Dear Friends of the Heart of Christ,

In this month of October, we celebrate the Feast of our sister, Saint Margaret Mary who received the revelations from Our Lord of His Sacred Heart. Pope Pius XII stated in his encyclical, HAURIETIS AQUAS: "But surely the most distinguished place among those who have fostered this most excellent type of devotion is held by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque who, under the spiritual direction of Blessed [now Saint] Claude de la Colombiere who assisted her work, was on fire with an unusual zeal to see to it that the real meaning of the devotion which had had such extensive developments to the great edification of the faithful should be established and be distinguished from other forms of Christian piety by the special qualities of love and reparation." The purpose of the visions was not to increase merit of the recipients but to send them as apostles for the spreading of God's love. St. Margaret Mary's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus pivoted around her belief in an unconditional love that continually beams its graces and grants a serene refuge in the midst of life's difficulties: "In his heart I sleep without care and repose without anxiety." In the first of many visions to St. Margaret Mary, Our Lord stated: "My divine heart is so inflamed with love for humanity, and for you in particular, that it can no longer contain within itself the flames of its ardent love, and must spread them through you, and manifest itself to people and enrich them with the precious treasures I will reveal." Later, Our Lord stated: "You are the beloved disciple of my Sacred Heart."

We have received this privileged message and now we are to share it, according to our means, with others around us. We can do this in two ways: interiorly by our prayers of reparation for the sins of others; also exteriorly by our participation in works and actions which carry the beam of His love to others. It may only be in our home where we share with loved ones our generosity, patience, and love. It is a call to go beyond our regular routine in order to seek out and find where we can carry the love of the Sacred Heart. The accent of our spiritual life is no longer formulated prayers and devotional practices to gain merit for ourselves, though these have a place, they are secondary to our major purpose as Christians: to join the purposes of the Sacred Heart. His purposes are to bring loving-kindness into human relationships, and to establish a kingdom of justice, peace, and love here on earth for every person and for the whole world. Devotion, like salvation, is personal, and yet it is communally conscious. We are now the witnesses, living out in our own quiet way our devotion to the Sacred Heart. Our Lord chose a cloistered nun of simple background and education to promote his message. Her prayer, love and dedication were greater than any mass media. We are giving what comes through us, not from us. Karl Rahner understood the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be a profound symbol of the mystery of being loved by God personally. "In love, the gates of my soul spring open, allowing me to breathe a new air of freedom and forget my own petty self. In love, my

God be Praised!



whole being streams forth out of the rigid confines of narrowness and self-assertion that make me a prisoner of my own poverty and emptiness.”

An example of someone who moved out of the “rigid confines” of herself was a French woman named Madeleine Delbrel who lived in the first half of the 20th century. She was called a true humanitarian with a contemplative nature who came to love God intimately in the streets, cafes, subways, and people of Paris. She once wrote: “We must let the love of God go to the very core of ourselves, to the very center around which our whole being revolves. Once we have heard God’s word, we no longer have the right not to accept it; once we have accepted it, we no longer have the right not to let it become flesh in us; once it has become flesh in us, we no longer have the right to keep it for ourselves alone. Henceforth, we belong to all those who are waiting for the Word. The time of witnesses continues without end. This incarnation of God’s Word in us, this allowing ourselves to be molded by it, is what we call witnessing.”

To take the Word of God seriously, we need all the strength of the Holy Spirit. We must awaken a fervor in our very being in the presence of the grace of each moment, a wildly passionate expectation for that strength. Bernard Haring states so beautifully the need for this devotion to the Sacred Heart: “We can briefly define the scope of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in this way: It is learning to love Jesus and to love with Jesus. This is what the world, threatened by lovelessness and godlessness, needs most urgently. Only a heart glowing with Christlike love can effectively repel all forms of hidden and open atheism. Only such a love can unmask all disguises of unbelief, and only the greatest love can find the remedies which humankind needs so desperately in this era of unbelief and godlessness.

At this crucial decision-making time in history, all who are captured by the heartfelt love of Christ must join hands and hearts for a common witness to faith bearing fruit in love and justice.” We will end with his prayer:

O heart of our Redeemer, you have shown us the Father in his compassion and saving justice. Your heart goes out to all who are in need. We hope to praise your mercy, and that of your heavenly Father, in all eternity. Help us in our commitment to mercy and saving justice in this valley of tears. Let it be the fitting prelude to this praise. Lord Jesus, we live in a world with many hardened hearts and threatening conflicts. Corruption constantly tempts us, and we cannot deny that we are already partially corrupted. Lord, heal us and make us effective signs of your healing mercy and justice. Divine Savior, send into this estranged world of ours men and women who will straightforwardly bring into it the gospel of mercy and peace. O heart of Jesus, touch the wealthy, affluent nations, groups, and individuals with a ray of your compassionate love and your zeal for saving justice, so that they may learn what kind of justice you and your heavenly Father want from them. O meek and powerful heart, you can heal our hearts from coldness and sloth and make us a blessing for many people by our deep repentance and conversion. Lord, let this happen soon!