

THE PIERCED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY

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The Pierced Heart of Jesus

In the Gospel according to St. John, chapter 13:1, we read: "[Jesus] loved His own in the world and He loved them to the end." He has loved us to the extreme, and this means that His Heart has spared nothing to manifest His love for mankind.

Jesus loved us to the extreme of offering His Body, His Blood and His Heart on the Cross. "Behold the Heart that so loved mankind and that has spared nothing in order to save them and show them my love," Jesus told Saint Margaret Mary of Alacoque as He physically showed her His Heart in 1675. How much does Jesus want us to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth (cf. Eph 3:18) of the love of His Heart! How much He desires that we set out to contemplate, as Saint John, the mysteries of love found in His pierced Heart!



In the narration of the Crucifixion, Saint John tells us, "But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead . . . one soldier thrust a lance into His side, and immediately blood and water flowed out" (Jn 19:33-34). What a moment for Saint John who had rested his head on the chest of Jesus during the Last Supper and had heard the beats of His oblation love for humanity. Upon contemplating the pierced Heart one enters into the great mysteries of the love of Jesus. This is the reason why the evangelist exclaimed in his first letter, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). How can he not exclaim this truth when, before his eyes, was manifested the love that had spared nothing so that the gates of the Kingdom may be opened for humanity, leaving the wound of His side as the eternal access for man to the Heart of God.

To contemplate the wound of His pierced Heart means entering into the school of love. That wound, caused by the rejection of mankind, is the one that Jesus transforms with His love into the direct access to His Heart and the Kingdom of Heaven. Does this love of His move you? Is not this wound the clearest sign of the generous oblation of His Heart? Is it not then the seal of His love and of His sacrifice? Is not His pierced Heart the triumph of love? Yes, it is a triumph of love because it overcomes evil with goodness, it overcomes death by giving life, and it responds to the hardness of the human heart by the offering His life, His Heart. This is the great victory of the pierced Heart - although Love was not loved, as St. Francis of Assisi said, it responds by loving to the extreme.

The love of the Heart of Christ transforms the wound caused by the rejection of men into the fountain of life from which gushes forth graces of salvation. The Sacred Heart of Jesus was pierced by the sword on the cross so that the treasures of grace would flow from Him for all men. It is "an unending spring of life, giving hope to every person, has streamed precisely from the Heart of God's Son, who died on the Cross. From the Heart of Christ crucified is born the new humanity redeemed from sin" (John Paul II, Letter, June 11, 1999).

From His pierced Heart the Church is born. Suffering that is embraced for love and with love has the capacity to redeem, to save, and to give life. St. Maximilian Kolbe would constantly repeat to his friars: "Love is fruitful; only love creates and only love gives life." Christ gives life to the Church after His death. When His Heart is pierced by the sword, a wound opens. From this fountain the Church and the Sacraments are born. What power flows from the pierced Heart! What a triumph of love over death! "Love is stronger than death" (Song 8:6). Love is stronger than death because it overcomes it, and it overcomes it because it does not cease to give life even after death.

The Pierced Heart of Mary

To this powerful fruitfulness of the pierced and priestly Heart of Jesus, the Maternal Heart of Mary, pierced mystically in communion with the Heart of Her Son, is fully united. Luke narrates how Simeon prophesized the sorrowful destiny of Jesus in which Mary would so closely participate: "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted and you yourself a sword will pierce" (Lk 2:34-35). These words indicate the concrete historical dimension in which the Son would carry out His messianic mission - in the midst of incomprehension, rejection and suffering. Love was not going to be received by many! To this sorrowful but fruitful path the Mother would be united in a unique and singular manner. The Heart of Mary, united indissolubly to Her Son's, would bear the same destiny. "At the foot of the Cross, "a sword pierces Mary's soul," fulfilling the words of Simeon... united to the redemptive Sacrifice of her Son is the maternal sacrifice of her heart" (John Paul II, Homily, September 15, 1988).

John Paul II spoke of this singular participation of the Virgin Mary in the redemptive suffering as a "spiritual crucifixion." It is a "spiritual piercing" whose purpose is to actively cooperate in giving birth, communicating life through the openness of Her maternal Heart. The spiritual maternity of Mary over mankind reaches its full realization on Cavalry when, in an explicit way, Jesus exclaims from the cross, "'Woman, behold, your son.' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother'" (Jn 19:26-27).

John Paul II, in his visit to the Sanctuary of Fatima in 1982, explained to us that these words of Jesus opened the Heart of Mary for Her spiritual maternity over the Church: "'Woman Behold Your Son' opened in a new way Mary's Immaculate Heart. Then the Roman soldier opened the Sacred Heart of Jesus with a lance shortly after He expired. Thus, 'Mary's Heart was opened by the same love for man and for the world with which Christ loved man and the world'" (May 13).

Just as the Heart of Jesus in the moment it was pierced gave birth to the Church and remained eternally opened to pour graces of salvation over humanity, the Heart of Mary, united spiritually to the piercing of Her Son, remained opened to always embrace with maternal love all those who accept the redemption of Her Son and to exercise Her maternal mediation over all men and in every historical moment.

Only Love Triumphs

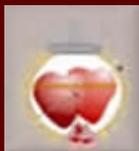
"...Look upon him whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37). How necessary is this contemplation to enter into the school of love. The love of the Heart of Jesus was capable of transforming death into life, pain into redemption, and the wound from His side into an open door and fountain of salvation. The love of the Heart of Mary was capable, through Her perfect and unconditional communion with the redemptive work, of bearing the same destiny of Her Son, unto the foot of the Cross. From the pierced Heart of Christ we have received salvation, liberation, and redemption. How many graces flow through the wound of His Heart! From the pierced Heart of Mary is born Her spiritual maternity which she exercises with generous diligence, powerful intercession and maternal mediation over the Church and the world.

May our contemplation of the love of the pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary profoundly move our hearts so that we may be transformed into living witnesses of the love that we contemplate. Only by contemplating love can our hearts be consumed by love. Only if we let ourselves be inflamed by that love can we build a new civilization where love triumphs. "The man of the year 2000 needs Christ's Heart to know God and to know himself; he needs it to build the civilization of love" (John Paul II, Letter, June 11, 1999).

In the love of the Pierced Hearts,

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