

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus - "The Final Effort of His Love"

Promises of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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God has always dealt with men in a way consonant with their nature--by drawing them to His Holy Will by promises of reward. It was so with His dealings with the chosen people under the Old Dispensation. It was the way of Christ in the New, promising even a hundredfold return for compliance with His desires. And so it is in the history of the revelation and propagation of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

"That men might more readily respond to that wonderful and overflowing desire of love," wrote Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical *Annum Sacrum* (1899) on the Devotion, **"Jesus, by the promise of rich rewards, called and drew all men to Him."**

Saint Margaret Mary in her writings insists again and again on the ardent desire of Christ to pour out blessings with a royal generosity on those who would honor His Divine Heart and return Him love for love.

These Promises of the Sacred Heart, in the form in which they are now popularly known and approved by the Church, far surpass in variety, universality and importance those attached to any other exercises of devotion in the Church.

They are addressed to all sorts of persons: to the fervent, the tepid, and the sinful.

They embrace every condition of life: priests, religious, and seculars.

They promise relief to the afflicted, strength to the tempted, consolation to the sorrowful, peace to the family, blessings in the home, success in our enterprises, mercy to the sinner, high sanctity to fervent souls, courage to the cold of heart. They promise power to the priest to soften the hardest hearts. They promise strength and courage on our death-bed, and tell us of the priceless gift of final perseverance and of a refuge in the Heart of Christ at the last moment.

What greater or more valuable favors than these could even the omnipotent and boundless love and goodness of the Sacred Heart bestow on us?

These Promises help us to an understanding of the truth of St. Margaret Mary's glowing words: **"Jesus showed me how this devotion is, as it were, the final effort of His love, the last invention of His boundless Charity."**

1st PROMISE -- "I will give to My faithful all the graces necessary in their state of life."

The duties of our daily life are numerous and often difficult. God grants us in response to prayer and frequent reception of the Sacraments all the necessary graces for our state of life. There are also extraordinary graces which lie outside the usual action of God's Providence, graces that He gives to His special friends. These are more efficacious graces, more plentifully given to the clients of the Sacred Heart.

2nd PROMISE -- "I will establish peace in their homes."

"Peace is the tranquillity of order, the serenity of mind, simplicity of heart, the bond of charity." (St. Augustine) It was the first thing the Angels wished to men at the birth of Jesus. Our Lord Himself bade His disciples to invoke it: "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!'" (Luke 10, 5) In the Heart of Jesus will be found the true peace, that makes the home the reflex and anticipation of our heavenly Home.

3rd PROMISE -- "I will comfort them in their afflictions."

The desire to comfort the sorrowful is the mark of a noble and kind heart. The Sacred Heart is the most noble and generous of hearts, both human and divine. How does He console us? Not necessarily by freeing us from sorrow and affliction. He knows the priceless value of the cross - that we have sins to expiate. By His grace, He makes what is painful tolerable. "I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our troubles." (2 Cor. 7,4)

4th PROMISE -- "I will be their secure refuge in life, and above all in death."

"One of the soldiers opened His side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water." (John 19, 34) Christ's side was opened to show that Divine Providence wished all men to find in His Divine Heart an assured refuge against the enemies of our salvation. In His Heart we can find protection, strength in our frailty, perseverance in our inconstancy, assured refuge in the dangers and toils of life, and at the hour of death.

5th PROMISE -- "I will bestow abundant blessings upon all their undertakings."

"God is love." He is ready to give His children abundant temporal blessings as long as they do not imperil our eternal interests. His "special" Providence protects and watches over those devoted to the Sacred Heart with peculiar love and tenderness. However, we should not be discouraged if our prayers for temporal favors are not always answered, for God always puts our eternal good before our temporal good.

6th PROMISE -- "Sinners shall find in My Heart the Source and the Infinite Ocean of Mercy."

The Redemption is the immortal drama of God's mercy; and our Divine Redeemer is, as it were, God's Mercy Incarnate. "With the Lord is kindness and with Him plenteous Redemption." (Ps. 129, 7) On earth the Heart of Christ was full of mercy toward all. Now in His glorified humanity in Heaven Jesus continues to show forth His boundless mercy, "always living to make intercession for us." (Heb. 7, 25)

7th PROMISE -- "Tepid souls shall become fervent."

Lukewarmness is a languid dying state of the soul that has lost its interest in religion. The Holy Spirit expresses deep disgust for such a soul: "You are neither cold nor hot ... I am about to vomit you out of My mouth." (Apc. 3, 15) The only remedy for it is devotion to the Sacred Heart, Who came "to cast fire on earth," i.e., to inspire the cold and tepid heart with new fear and love of God.

8th PROMISE -- "Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection."

High perfection is the reward that Christ bestows on the fervent clients of His Divine Heart; for this devotion has, as its special fruit, to transform us into a close resemblance to our Blessed Lord. This is done by kindling in our hearts the fire of divine love, which, as St. Paul says, "is the bond of perfection." (Col 3, 14) Through devotion to the Sacred Heart self-love will give way to an ardent zeal for His interests.

9th PROMISE -- "I will bless every place in which an image of My Heart shall be exposed and honored."

Religious pictures are a powerful appeal and inspiration. The Sacred Heart is an open book wherein we may read the infinite love of Jesus for us in His Passion and Death. He shows us His Heart, cut open by the lance, all aglow like a fiery furnace of love, whose flames appear bursting forth from the top. It is encircled with thorns, the anguishing smarts of unheeded love. May it ever impel us to acts of love and generosity.

10th PROMISE -- "I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts."

The conversion of a sinner calls sometimes for extraordinary graces. God never forces the free will of a human being. But He can give actual graces with which He foresees the sinner will overcome the resisting attitude of the most obstinate sinful soul. This, then, is what occurs in the case of priests who are animated with great devotion to the Sacred Heart.

11th PROMISE -- "Those who promote this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be effaced."

This Promise holds out to promoters of devotion to the Sacred Heart a wonderful reward - they "shall have their names written in My Heart." These words imply a strong and faithful friendship of Christ Himself, and present to us "the Book of Life" of St. John: "I will not blot his name out of the book of life." (Apc. 3,5)

12th PROMISE -- "To those who shall communicate on the First Friday, for nine consecutive months, I will grant the grace of final penitence."

This Promise contains a great reward, which is nothing less than Heaven. "Final perseverance is a gratuitous gift of God's goodness, and cannot be merited as an acquired right by any individual act of ours." (Council of Trent) It is given as the reward for a series of acts continued to the end: "He who has persevered to the end will be saved." (Matt. 10,22)

