

Message for the Solemnity of the Heart of Mary - June 9, 2018

Dear brothers:

We are sons of the heart – of the *Immaculate Heart of Mary*. As Claretian missionaries, we are born of her heart, formed, and accompanied by the same heart. As Pope Saint John Paul II observed in his *Redemptor Hominis*, “the mystery of the Redemption took shape beneath the heart of the Virgin of Nazareth when she pronounced her ‘fiat’. From then on, under the special influence of the Holy Spirit, this heart, the heart of both a virgin and a mother, has always followed the work of her Son and has gone out to all those whom Christ has embraced and continues to embrace with inexhaustible love.” (22).

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we honor her maternal heart by reminding ourselves of our identity as her sons, renewing our pledge to live up to the “pen picture” of such sons, as given by Father Claret in his famous definition of a missionary (cf. *Aut.* 494). What a blessing for us to be called the sons of her heart! For, her heart is truly a temple of God, beating every moment with love for God and of humanity. As St. Jerome wrote, “even while living in the world, the heart of Mary was so filled with motherly tenderness and compassion for [people] that no-one ever suffered so much for their own pains, as Mary suffered for the pains of her children.” Our struggles are her struggles, our dreams are her dreams, our joys are her joys. Pope Francis reminds us that Mary is “the handmaid of the Father who sings his praises. She is the friend who is ever concerned that wine not be lacking in our lives. She is the woman whose heart was pierced by a sword and who understands all our pain. As mother of all, she is a sign of hope for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice. She is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life, opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love. As a true mother, she walks at our side, she shares our struggles and she constantly surrounds us with God’s love” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 286).

This heart of Mary is tender, full of compassion; but, as is evident from her *Magnificat* (Cf. Luke 1:46-55) it also seeks justice – God’s justice: She dreams, desires, and works for a transformed world where the poor are cared for; the oppressed go free; pride, power, and hunger are eliminated; and God’s mercy rules. “This interplay of justice and tenderness, of contemplation and concern for others, is what makes the ecclesial community look to Mary as a model of evangelization” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 288): Indeed, a model for our Claretian evangelization. We seek refuge in this heart; and we pray that our hearts truly become like hers, so filled with love for Christ and suffering humanity. We pray as Mother Teresa prayed: “Mary, give me your Heart: so beautiful, so pure, so immaculate; your Heart so full of love and humility that I may be able to receive Jesus in the Bread of Life and love Him as You love Him and serve Him in the distressing guise of the poor.”

It makes heart-sense that the Solemnity of the Immaculate Heart follows immediately the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart: the heart of the Mother closely follows that of the Son. Symeon, the New Theologian, of the tenth century wrote that we must put our mind in the heart and stay inside it, and from the depth of the heart, we should lift up our prayers to God. We may interpret his words as an invitation to join our hearts with the heart of Mary, contemplating the heart of her Son. I wish you all the joys and blessings of the Mother’s Heart, our missionary hearth and home.

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