

External Solemnity of Sacred Heart of Jesus 2009

There are times in my meditations when I ask myself (along with the Psalmist) what does God care about us miserable, insignificant creatures. He is all self-sufficient, perfectly content in Himself, needing no one, while we—as our mortality must often remind us and as our dispensable place in the world attests—we are closer to being nothing: ultimately unimportant, like specks of sand on a vast seashore. “What is man that you are mindful of him...that you care for him?” (Ps. 8).

Even so, God is much taken up with humankind. He made the whole visible creation—the earth, the vast galaxies—all for the service of man. Moreover, He has said that He can be ‘pleased’ by the deeds we do or be ‘offended’ by our misconduct. This too is remarkable: God’s sensitivity, His vulnerability to human responses. Again, what does God care—He who has no need of us?

This mystery is further compounded by the Incarnation—that God became man—an infinite leap of dignity for God. In His humanity, God took on a new sensitivity and vulnerability. He could be injured in body, hated as man, and suffer the worst of all human pains: rejection, bitterness, and the stinging emptiness of...(here’s a keyword)...unrequited love. Unrequited love: a one-way love, a love that goes out from one person with all possible ardor and passion, but which gets no return. The resulting grief, desolation, emptiness, joylessness, hollow-feeling of being unloved in return for love is the cause of untold suffering, often leading to despair, hopelessness, loss of interest in life and in living: the proverbial ‘hitting rock bottom’ that exposes the tragic depths of the human capacity for despondency.

Now what of this subject for the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Why have I led you to this frightful realization of human depletion? It is because God has registered His complaint against humanity in the revelation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I would like to quote here from a dictation taken of our Lord's words by St. Margaret Mary:

Behold this Heart which has so loved men as to spare itself nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, to testify to them its love, and in return I receive nothing but ingratitude from the greater part of men by the contempt, irreverence, sacrileges, and coldness which they have for Me in this sacrament of My love. (Croisset, p. 53)

The Heart of Jesus is the symbol not only of God's love for man, but also of God's capacity to be hurt by man. God made for Himself a way of receiving injuries from us through His Sacred Heart. But (kindly notice this) you will not find the Sacred Heart of Jesus devotion in non-Catholic religions. And there's good reason for that. The Sacred Heart of Jesus has to do with one particular aspect of the Catholic faith: the Holy Eucharist, the *real* Communion, not an empty representation of it: but the true Body of Christ which contains divinity. God in the Host (besides being the means of an intimate union with the devout communicant) is capable of receiving new injuries, insults, neglects, sacrilegious Communion, mishandling, ridicule, contempt, coolness, irreverence, dismissal, profanation, mis-interpretation and misunderstanding.

Why does God put up with it? Why did God invent the Holy Eucharist when He could plainly foresee in His divine mind all the abuse and irreverence even from the time of the Last Supper, indeed, from all eternity? Who can account for the unspeakably great patience of God?

The Eucharist and the Sacred Heart are inseparable realities of God's love, a love that is, all told, one-sided: all joy going out of Him, little or nothing in return.

O Patient Jesus, please continue to love us, though we are so utterly unworthy of You; though we persist in loving creatures—ourselves

especially—more than You. At times, we will succeed in returning love for love by our obedience, our reverence to the Most Blessed Sacrament, our devotion in receiving Holy Communion. But we will likely fail You often and in this way continue to extend the agony of Your Passion in a mystical way through our sins and our many and thoughtless acts of neglect.

It's a wonder that God allows Himself to be bullied by us, mistreated by us, wounded by us, creatures of little or no account. It's also a wonder that we can, if we choose, come to His rescue, that we can console Him and please Him. For what can our feeble words, our acts of compassion, our expressions of love mean to Him, the Almighty, the Infinite? Apparently, a great deal.

This is the mystery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the corresponding mystery of our sinfulness. God has high regard, great concern, and infinite love, for lowly, sinful humankind.