

Franciscan Prayer – First paragraph – page 109 - Ilia Delio, OSF; Used by permission

The Heart Turned Toward God

There is a mail order firm by the name of “Heart Matters” that sends me catalogs every month hoping that it can inspire my heart or that of someone else through note cards, CDs and “Precious Moments” figurines. Sometimes I think we clutter our hearts with a lot of stuff that we think “matters” but in the end it is simply a lot of stuff. What matters to the heart is more than things (although “things” may, indeed, inspire it at times). The heart thrives on the life-giving spirit of love. Friendship is a matter of the heart. It is the heart’s desire to share life with another person. The heart (cor) is the center of the whole personal life of the human person. It is the seat of intellectual and spiritual life of reason and will, and the inner movements of experiencing life (or the lack of it). The heart is the place of encounter, where God reveals himself to us. As Jesus tells us in the Gospel, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34). Francis believed that the heart was the seat of the will, the root of sin and the place of conversion. The heart is made for God and is the proper dwelling place of the most blessed Trinity; it is the place of encounter between person and Creator. In the heart the person receives the life-giving awareness of God; it is where one comes to know God. The human heart is created to be the home of the Spirit of the Lord through whose life-giving power relationship with God becomes reality. To surrender the “heart” is the fundamental act of following Christ.

The Saint – Earlier exhortation, Chapter I, - pp. 41-42

Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance
The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful (1209-1215)

The earliest manuscript of this writing, located in the Guarnacci Library in the Italian city of Volterra, introduces it with these words: “These are words of life and salvation. Whoever reads and follows them will find life and draw from the Lord salvation.” While Kajetan Esser entitled it “The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful,” it has been more correctly seen as an exhortation given to the first penitents who came to Francis desiring to share in his Gospel way of life. Since 1976, when Kajetan Esser brought the text into prominence, it has served as the Prologue to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

In the Name of the Lord!
[Chapter One]
Those Who do Penance

All those who love the Lord *with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength* and love their neighbors as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of penance. O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because *the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make Its home and dwelling place* among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers to Him when we do *the will of the Father who is in heaven*. We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others.

O how glorious it is to have a holy and great Father in heaven! O how holy, consoling to have such a beautiful and wonderful Spouse! O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and, above all things, desirable: to have such a Brother and such a Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who laid down his life for His sheep and prayed to His Father, Saying:

Holy Father, in your name, save those whom you have given me in the world; they are yours and you gave them to me. The words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and have believed in truth that I have come from you and they have known that you have sent me.

I pray for them and not for the world. Bless and sanctify them; I sanctify myself for them I pray not only for them, but for those who will believe in me through their word that they might be sanctified in being one as we are.

I wish, Father, that where I am, they also may be with me that they may see my glory in your kingdom. Amen.

Deus Caritas Est – Pope Benedict XVI – Paragraph 19

http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html