

## DEVOTION TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS



*In this special manifestation Christ pointed to His Heart, with definite and repeated words, as the symbol by which men should be attracted to a knowledge and recognition of His love; and at the same time He established it as a sign or pledge of mercy and grace for the needs of the Church of our times. –Pius XII, Haurietis Aquas, 1956*

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as we know it today, came about through the visions and experiences of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, given to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in France during the Seventeenth Century.

For it was these experiences, which brought the Devotion to the *public* sphere – spreading them to the Church universal. Whilst St. Margaret Mary received many such visions, there are three which are particularly associated with the development and practice of the Devotions.

These revelations, particularly connected to the practice of these Devotions, are referred to as the Three Great Apparitions. They took place in the chapel of the Visitation convent at Paray-le-Monial, France between 1673 and 1675.

[...] It is seen by the Church that Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, began at the Last Supper, at the instigation of the Eucharist itself. As Our Lord sat at the Paschal table, before pronouncing those sacred words that would become so core to our entire Faith (in fact, the very heart of the Church Herself) His Beloved Disciple, Saint John the Evangelist, lay his head upon the breast of Our Lord. He laid his head upon the Heart of Jesus Christ and remained there in repose.

It is in imitation of this repose, that Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus began. It then continued to develop, with an emphasis from the early Church Fathers, on the entering into the sacred wound in Christ's side—the wound, created by the piercing of the soldier's lance, whilst He hung on the cross. *Cor Jesus, lancea perforatum, Misereere nobis* (Heart of Jesus, pierced by a lance, have mercy on us), as the Litany of the Sacred Heart says.

For it was from this Sacred Wound that Blood and Water flowed—His Blood and Water—which was seen by the early Fathers, as the birth of the Church Herself. As the early theologian Tertullian stated: By the wound in the side of Christ was formed the Church, the true Mother of all the living.

But whilst the early saints focused their devotion to this Heart as the place of repose—as the Sacred Wound into which one could enter and rest—when we come to the visions and experiences of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, we find a new dimension emerges.

For in these Apparitions, we meet a very personal Jesus—who is deeply distressed at our having neglected Him.

*(continues)*

Moreover, we meet here a Jesus, Who is no longer solely giving to us, as He did from the Cross. We encounter a new Spirituality of His Heart, which does not simply involve reposing upon His breast or lying safe and hidden within His Sacred Wound.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus who appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque is pointing to something further. He focuses our attention not simply on His burning love for us, but also on those instances where He has been neglected by us.

[...] We fail to watch, as His disciples failed. We fail to give homage, through our ingratitude, or rather our forgetfulness. It is now time for us to make some return for all that He has given us.

This is the message of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. And of course, this need for acknowledgement and gratitude towards Him is essential for our Salvation.

*Text from "An Introduction on the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus," corjesusacratissimum.org; spelling errors in the original have been corrected*

### **12 Promises of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary**

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life.
2. I will give peace in their families.
3. I will console them in all their troubles.
4. I will be their refuge in life and especially in death.
5. I will abundantly bless all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection.
9. I will bless those places wherein the image of my Sacred Heart shall be exposed and venerated.
10. I will give to priests the power to touch the most hardened hearts.
11. Persons who propagate this devotion shall have their names eternally written in my Heart.
12. In the excess of the mercy of my heart, I promise you that my all powerful love will grant to all those who will receive Communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months, the grace of final repentance: they will not die in my displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments; and my Heart will be their secure refuge in that last hour.