
Article

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Christology

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Abstract

This article examines the Christological implications of Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. After exploring the biblical significance of the heart, it provides an overview of the development of Sacred Heart devotion in Catholic history. It then turns to the Christological significance of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in light of papal teachings. The Christological significance is explored under nine categories: (1) the hypostatic union; (2) the infinite love of Jesus for humanity; (3) the humanity of Christ; (4) the motivation to love Jesus and others more deeply; (5) the link to Divine Mercy; (6) the link to the Paschal Mystery; (7) acts of reparation; (8) the Eucharist; and (9) the union of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Keywords: devotion; *latria*; heart; love; Jansenism; St. Margaret Mary Alacoque; reparation

1. Introduction

Devotion to the Heart of Jesus has biblical roots, and it has manifested itself in various ways since the beginning of the Christian faith. In the Catholic Church, the *cultus* of the Sacred Heart of Jesus has especially grown since the eighteenth century. During the pontificates of Benedict XIV (1740–1758) and Clement XIII (1758–1769), numerous confraternities of the Sacred Heart were formed, and in 1765, the Feast of the Sacred Heart was given papal endorsement (O'Donnell 2018, pp. 149–50). It is common now to find statues and images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Catholic churches, schools, and homes. Many Catholic hospitals, schools, and universities have been named after the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and there are multiple Catholic organizations dedicated to promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (O'Donnell 2018, p. 323).

Is devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus simply an expression of popular piety or does it have a deeper theological and Christological significance? In the Catholic Church, devotion to the Heart of Jesus has been the subject of four papal encyclicals: *Annum Sacrum* by Leo XIII (1899); *Miserentissimus Redemptor* by Pius XI (1928); *Haurietis Aquas* by Pius XII (1956); and *Dilexit Nos* by Pope Francis (2024). As will be seen, these encyclicals show that devotion to the Sacred Heart has great significance for Christology.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus continues to be a subject of scholarly inquiry. During the 2015–2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis, a group of scholars held an international congress on the Heart of Jesus. This congress took place 31 March to 3 April, 2016, in Barcelona, Spain, and it resulted in the publication of *Cor Iesu, Vultus misericordiae* [Heart of Jesus, Face of Mercy] (Cervera Barranco and Martinez Garcia 2017).

The history of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is also the subject of a multi-volume project by the Italian scholar, Dario Di Maso, entitled *Sacro Cuore di Gesù. Origine e sviluppo storico del culto della devozione* [The Sacred Heart of Jesus: Origin and Historical



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Development of the Cult and Devotion]. Volume 1 of this study was published in 2023 by Gangemi Editrice in Rome ([Di Maso 2023](#)).

In 2007, the French scholar, Édouard Glotin, published *La Bible du Coeur de Jésus: Un Livre de Vie pour les générations du IIIe millénaire* [The Bible of the Heart of Jesus: A Book of Life for the generations of the Third Millennium] ([Glotin 2007](#)). A socio-political history of the Sacred Heart devotion in France is the subject of a book by Raymond Jonas entitled *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart; An Epic Tale for Modern Times* ([Jonas 2000](#)).

The spirituality of devotion to the Sacred Heart has also been a subject of scholarly interest, especially in relation to the 1673–1675 visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690) and her Jesuit spiritual advisor, St. Claude de la Colombière (1641–1682). In *A Companion to Jesuit Mysticism*, edited by [Robert Markys \(2017\)](#), there is a chapter by William P. O'Brien, S.J. entitled “Claude La Colombière (1641–1682), Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (1647–1690).” This article explores the psychological and physical sufferings of Margaret Mary Alacoque and how Claude La Colombière counseled her to accept God’s love and mercy revealed in her visions of the Sacred Heart. O’Brien is also the translator of *Claude La Colombière: Sermons. Volume 1: Christian Conduct* published by Northern Illinois University Press ([O’Brien 2014](#)).

Wendy Wright has explored the “embodied mysticism” of Mary Margaret Alacoque ([Wright 2000](#)) as well as the visual imagery of the Sacred Heart. The imagery of the heart helps to nurture devotion to the love of God revealed in Jesus.

Another recent area of study has been the union of the hearts of Jesus and Mary. This union goes back to St. John Eudes (1601–1680), but during the late 1980s, a popular Catholic movement known as the “Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary” emerged. There have been various symposia on this theme ([Scrivani 2016](#)), including one held at Fatima in September 1986. In a 22 September 1986 address, Pope John Paul II greeted the participants of this symposium, and he noted that the title of “the Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary” comes from his Angelus Address of 15 September 1985 ([Moell 2004](#), p. 52).

Fr. Dwight Campbell, S.T.D., a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, WI, and former president of the Mariological Society of America, has published a volume of over 1000 pages entitled *Through the Heart of Mary to the Heart of Jesus*. This volume explores the origin and development of devotion to the Heart of Mary and how this devotion is linked to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

How, though, do these works on the Heart of Jesus (and Mary) relate to Christology? Do standard textbooks on Christology manifest an interest in devotion to the Sacred Heart? The response to this latter question seems, for the most part, to be “no.” For example, Gerald O’Collins, S.J., does not touch on devotion to the Sacred Heart in his *Christology: A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus* Second Edition ([O’Collins 2009](#)). The Sacred Heart of Jesus is not treated in *The Incarnate Word: A Thomistic Study in Christology* by Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, [White 2015](#)). Fr. Roch Kereszty has one brief mention of devotion to the Sacred Heart in his *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*. This reference, though, is only to show that Bernard of Clairvaux’s approach to the Heart of Jesus is focused on “the bowels of God’s mercy” rather than the human love of Jesus ([Kereszty 2002](#), p. 478). One book on Christology that does devote some space to devotion to the Sacred Heart is that of Edward T. Oakes, S.J., entitled *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Christology*. In this book, Fr. Oakes devotes 10 pages (290–300) to “Catholic Devotion to the Sacred Heart.” He treats this devotion as part of a broader chapter on the “Christologies of the Heart.” For Oakes, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not only an antidote to the Jansenist denial of the universal love of God; it is also an antidote to the “bloodless rationalism” of certain aspects of the Enlightenment ([Oakes 2011](#), p. 298).

What, though, does it mean to have devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? In Catholic theology, devotion—*devotio* in Latin—refers to “the prayerful and affective dedication that makes believers responsive to God’s will” (O’Collins and Farrugia 1991, p. 54). Devotion can also be defined as “the disposition of will to do promptly what concerns the worship and service of God” (Hardon 2001, p. 156). Thomas Aquinas notes that devotion is derived from *devovere*, which means to vow, and in this sense it is an act of religion (*Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 82, a. 2). As an act of religion, devotion can be further understood as “an inclination and readiness for all that relates to the service and worship of God” (Verheyelzoon 1955, xix). Devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore, refers to an act of religion that manifests a desire to worship God and follow his will. Because Jesus is understood as the Incarnation of the Word of God, devotion to his Sacred Heart is ultimately the worship of God who has assumed a human nature complete with a human heart.

After the introduction (part 1), this article will examine the Christological dimensions of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in four successive parts: (2) the biblical significance of the heart and how it relates to Christology; (3) the development of devotion to the Sacred Heart in Catholic history; (4) the Christological significance of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in light of papal teachings, and (5) Summary and Conclusions. The article will then offer a brief summary and conclusion. The purpose of this article is to show that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not simply a pious devotion but a dimension of Catholic theology and spirituality that has important Christological implications.

2. The Biblical Significance of the Heart

The heart has a cross-cultural significance because it “has a primal character in so many world cultures” (K. Rahner 1957, p. 132). It generally refers to the innermost core of the human person or the seat of affections. Pope Francis notes that in classical Greek, “the word *kardia* denotes the inmost part of human beings, animals and plants. For Homer, it indicates not only the center of the body, but also the human soul and spirit” (Pope Francis 2024, no. 3).

In the Bible, the heart refers to “the principle and organ of the interior and religious life of man” (H. Rahner 1957, p. 17). In both the Old and New Testaments, the “heart” is “the core or center of the human person,” and it includes “one’s understanding, willing, memory and affective life” (Campbell 2024, p. 14). Timothy O’Donnell provides this description:

The heart is the spiritual center of man’s soul, the core of all his volitional and emotional and intellectual activity. It therefore represents the whole person... this symbolic understanding of the heart as the “center of man” has a firm foundation in scripture. It is in fact the most important and most frequent word in Old Testament anthropology. *Leb* and *lebab* occur over 858 times in the Old Testament... In semitic thought, it signifies the entire inner life of the person (O’Donnell 2018, p. 3).

In the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, references to the heart abound. Moses tells the people of Israel: “Circumcise your hearts” (Deut 10: 16).¹ A similar exhortation is found in Jer 4:4: “For the sake of the Lord be circumcised; remove the foreskins of your hearts.” Psalm 40:9 addresses itself to God and says: “To do your will is my delight; my God, your law is in my heart.” The prophecy of Jer 31:33 also points to the heart as the true locus of God’s law: “I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts.” Ezek 36:26 likewise says, “I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts.” Proverbs 4:23 provides this admonition: “Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the sources of life.”

New Testament references to the “heart” carry the same meaning as the Old Testament. The New Testament uses the Greek word, *kardia*, for heart, but *koilia* (bosom) and *splanchna*

(bowels) can also be understood as references to the heart. Pius XII, in his 1965 encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*, cites Jn 7:37–39 as follows: “If any man thirsts let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As Scripture says, ‘Out of his heart (*koilia*), there shall flow rivers of living waters’ (Isa 12:3). Now He said this of the Spirit, which they who believe in Him should receive.” ([Pius XII 1956](#), no. 3). In this passage, “the connotation of *koilia* and *kardia* is the same: both mean ‘heart.’” ([H. Rahner 1957](#), p. 23). In a similar way, Phil 1:8 literally means, “For God is my witness, how I long for you all in the bowels [*splanchnois*] of Jesus Christ.” This, though, could be translated as “how I long for you all in the heart of Jesus Christ.” *Splanchna* here could be understood as “a strict equivalent for *kardia*, and therefore means ‘heart.’” ([H. Rahner 1957](#), p. 20).

There are many other New Testament passages that refer to the heart. In Mt 5:8, Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure of heart (*kardia*), for they shall see God.” In Mt 6:21, we are told, “For where your treasure, there will your heart (*kardia*) also be.” Lk 2:19 and 51 show how Mary pondered and kept all things in her heart. In Lk 2:35, Simeon tells Mary, “And thine own soul (heart) a sword shall pierce.” Pope Francis sees in Lk 2:19 and 51 an understanding of the heart as that which unifies and harmonizes our personal history.

The heart is also capable of unifying and harmonizing our personal history, which may seem hopelessly fragmented, yet is the place where everything can make sense. The Gospel tells us this in speaking of Our Lady, who saw things with the heart. She was able to dialogue with the things she experienced by pondering them in her heart, treasuring their memory, and viewing them in a greater perspective. The best expression of how the heart thinks is found in the two passages in Saint Luke’s Gospel that speak to us of how Mary “treasured (*synetérei*) all these things and pondered (*symbállousa*) them in her heart” (cf. Lk 2:19 and 51). The Greek verb *symbállein*, “ponder”, evokes the image of putting two things together (“symbols”) in one’s mind and reflecting on them in a dialogue with oneself. In Luke 2:51, the verb used is *dietérei*, which has the sense of “keep”. What Mary “kept” was not only her memory of what she had seen and heard but also those aspects of it that she did not yet understand; these nonetheless remained present and alive in her memory, waiting to be “put together” in her heart ([Pope Francis 2024](#), no. 19). The Bible clearly understands “the heart” as the interior center of the human person. What, though, is the significance of the heart for Christology? For Joseph Ratzinger, devotion to the Heart of Jesus is an expression of the Paschal Mystery and “Paschal spirituality” ([Ratzinger 1986](#), 50). The Paschal Mystery, though, is only made possible by the incarnation of the Word of God in human flesh. The Bible forbids graven images, but “it represents the mystery of God in the metaphors of the body and its world” ([Ratzinger 1986](#), p. 52). According to Ratzinger, the Incarnation is the fulfillment of this biblical preparation.

Because of the Incarnation, the Word of God possessed a human heart. [Vatican II \(1965\)](#), in its *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes*, offers this description: “He [Jesus] worked with human hands; He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart” ([Vatican II 1965, Gaudium et Spes](#), no. 22). In his Angelus Message of 27 June 1982, Pope John Paul II teaches that,

By the work of the Holy Spirit, the Heart was formed in this humanity. The Heart, which is the central organ of Christ’s human organism and at the same time the true symbol of his interior life: his thoughts his will, his sentiments. Through this Heart, the humanity of Christ is in a particular way the “temple of God” and at the same time, through this Heart, it remains ever open to human beings and to everything human: “Heart of Jesus. of whose fullness we have received.” ([Moell 2004](#), p. 57).²

How, though, does the New Testament link the Heart of Jesus to the Paschal Mystery? For devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one of the most important passages is John 19:34,

which describes blood and water flowing from the side of the crucified Jesus. Tertullian (c. 160–235) understood the blood and water as a symbol of the Church being formed from the side of Christ, the new Adam (O'Donnell 2018, p. 76). Pope Francis notes that St. Augustine opened the way for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by his reflections on the wounded side of Christ (Jn 19:34) and the beloved disciple reclining on Jesus' bosom at the Last Supper (Jn 13:23):

Saint Augustine opened the way to devotion to the Sacred Heart as the locus of our personal encounter with the Lord. For Augustine, Christ's wounded side is not only the source of grace and the sacraments, but also the symbol of our intimate union with Christ, the setting of an encounter of love. There we find the source of the most precious wisdom of all, which is knowledge of him. In effect, Augustine writes that John, the beloved disciple, reclining on Jesus' bosom at the Last Supper, drew near to the secret place of wisdom. Here we have no merely intellectual contemplation of an abstract theological truth. As Saint Jerome explains, a person capable of contemplation "does not delight in the beauty of that stream of water, but drinks of the living water flowing from the side of the Lord" (Pope Francis 2024, no. 103).

The wounded side of Christ came to be understood as the pierced Heart of the Savior. In his Angelus Address of 27 June 1982, John Paul II links the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to the pierced side of Jesus described in Jn 19:34:

The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart reminds us above all of the moments when this Heart 'was pierced with a lance' and by this piercing was visibly opened to humankind and the world. Reciting the litany—and in general venerating the Divine Heart—we learn the mystery of redemption in all its divine and human depth (Moell 2004, p. 58).

John Paul II—in his homily of September 18, 1984 given in Vancouver, Canada—notes that "When we say 'Heart of Jesus Christ' we address ourselves to the whole Christological mystery: the mystery of the God-man." (Moell 2004, p. 49).

The biblical foundations for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus take on different aspects. In one sense, the heart expresses the inner humanity of Jesus who is "meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29). The physical heart of Jesus also embodies his suffering for the sake of human redemption. As Joseph Ratzinger explains, "the mystery of Easter, the mystery of suffering, is of its very nature a mystery of the heart" (Ratzinger 1986, p. 60). The pierced side of Jesus on the cross links his Sacred Heart to the Paschal Mystery, which is ultimately the mystery of divine love incarnate. In its *Decree on Justification*, the Council of Trent points to love as the motivating factor for the sacrifice of the cross. The meritorious cause for justification "is the most beloved only begotten Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who 'while we were enemies' [Rom 5:10], 'out of the great love with which he loved us' [Eph 2:4], merited for us justification by his most holy Passion on the wood of the Cross" (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 1529). Finally, the heart of Jesus is a human heart that can love human beings with a love that is both human and divine. The medieval mystics would find support for this love in the Song of Songs 4:9, which in the Vulgate reads: "*Vulnaristi cor meum*" [You have wounded my heart]. The mystics would also appeal to the Song of Songs 8:6, "*Pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum . . . quia fortis est ut mors dilectio* [Set me as a seal upon your heart . . . for love is as strong as death] (Ratzinger 1986, p. 61; see also Stierli 1957, p. 64).

3. The Development of Devotion to the Sacred Heart in Catholic History

Scholars disagree as to when devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus actually began in Catholic history. There are some who argue that it only really begins in the seventeenth century after the apparitions to Margaret-Mary Alacoque were made known (Bainvel 1941, p. 303; see also O'Donnell (2018, p. 68), who acknowledges but disputes this perspective). There is, however, a general consensus that “the constitutive elements of the cult to the Sacred Heart of Jesus are substantially contained in revelation”³ (Penzo 1950, p. 1059). Hugo Rahner admits that “it is only since 1000 A.D. that [the devotion] has taken forms articulate enough to give a coherent history” (H. Rahner 1957, p. 37). Nevertheless, he believes that the devotion as it later developed “is a conscious return to the fundamental notions that were drawn from the Bible and elaborated by the theology of the first Christian millennium” (H. Rahner 1957, p. 37). The Patristic references to the pierced side of Christ are considered to be a basis for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Although the Fathers do not typically speak of the Heart of Jesus in reference to Jn 19:34, they do provide “a theology and philosophy of the heart” (Ratzinger 1986, p. 65). This is especially true of Augustine, who makes frequent use of the word “*cor*” in his *Confessions* (Ratzinger 1986, p. 65). In his 5 October 1986 letter to Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Jesuits, Pope John Paul II points to the pierced side of Christ in Jn 19:34 as a major source for the Patristic theology of Christ’s Heart:

From the very beginning the Church has contemplated the pierced Heart of the crucified Christ from which blood and water, the symbols of the sacraments which constitute the Church; and in the Heart of the Word incarnate, the Fathers of the Christian East and West saw the beginning of the whole work of our salvation, the fruit of the love of the divine Redeemer, whose pierced Heart is a particularly expressive symbol (Moell 2004, p. 76).

Catholic scholars such as Hugo Rahner, S.J., and Philip Mulhern, O.P., “have established a biblical basis for devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in light of Patristic commentaries, based on John 7:37–38 and 19:34–37” (Campbell 2024, p. 20). There is, though, disagreement with regard to the interpretation of Jn 7:37–38 because of variant modes of punctuation. The more ancient version—sometimes called the Ephesian version—reads:

If any man thirst, let him come to me.

And let him drink, who believes in me.

As the Scripture says:

Fountains of living water

Shall flow from his bosom (translation from H. Rahner 1957, p. 30).

The more common version—sometimes called the Alexandrian—reads:

If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.

He that believes in me, as the Scripture says,

Fountains of living water shall flow

from his bosom (translation from H. Rahner 1957, p. 30).

As Hugo Rahner notes, there is a major difference in meaning between the two versions: “In the first case the streams of living waters is predicated of the Messias, from whose body they spring. In the second they spring from the body of the believer” (H. Rahner 1957, p. 30). It is significant, as Dwight Campbell points out, that “Pius XII, in the first line of *Hauretis Aquas*, adheres to the more ancient interpretations, for he says: ‘You shall draw waters from joy out of the Savior’s fountain’ (cf. Is. 12:3)—that is, from his Sacred Heart” (Campbell 2024, p. 20).⁴

Hugo Rahner maintains that the Church Fathers joined the pierced side of Christ as described in Jn 19:34 to “the streams of living water” (*flumina ... aquae vivae*) mentioned in Jn 7:38. As he explains:

So fathers and theologians from Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria to Canisius, in the lessons of the feast and its octave speak repeatedly of the fountain of living water taking its rise from the wound in Jesus’ side. Through this biblical image they express the loftiest mysteries of Revelation: the living water, streaming from a pierced heart, crystalizes the truth that the “Spirit” has again been poured out on the human race, but only because he who possessed the Spirit in all its fullness has immolated his Heart (H. Rahner 1957, pp. 38–39).

As noted above, the Greek word *koilia* found in Jn 7:38 can be translated as “bosom,” but it also can be understood as “heart” (H. Rahner 1957, p. 23). The translation of heart is justified because the Greek Septuagint uses the word *koilia* in its translation of Jer 31:33, which speaks of writing the law on their hearts. Heb 10:16 cites Jer 31:33 using the phrase “*dando leges meas in cordibus eorum*”—placing my laws in their hearts (See H. Rahner 1957, p. 23).

References to the heart of Christ are not common among the Church Fathers, but they are not absent. For example, in the *Acta* of the martyrdom of Sanctus, the young deacon, we read how the martyr was able to endure torture “by the springs of living water that flowed from out the Heart of Christ” (McGratty 1951, p. 23; H. Rahner 1957, p. 44). St. Justin Martyr (100–165) associated the Heart of Jesus with the water-giving rock of 1 Cor 10:4. In his *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, he writes: “We Christians are the true Israel which springs from Christ; for we are carved out of his heart (*koilia*) as from a rock” (H. Rahner 1957, p. 45, citing Dialogue 135, 5). St. Irenaeus (c. 130–202) sees the Church flowing from the heart of Christ in *Adversus haereses* III, 24,1 (See H. Rahner 1957, p. 44; O’Donnell 2018, p. 74).

The belief that the Church came forth from the side of Christ, the New Adam, is based on the parallel between Gen. 2:21–23 and Jn 19:34. A number of Church Fathers, including Tertullian (c. 160–235), Ambrose (339–397), Augustine (354–430), and John Chrysostom (c. 344–407) understood the blood and water flowing from the pierced side of Christ in Jn 19:34 as constitutive for the formation of the Church (See H. Rahner 1957, pp. 47–55; O’Donnell 2018, pp. 71–79). *Vatican II* (1963, 1964) cites Jn 19:34 as a symbol of the origin of the Church from the blood and water that flowed from the side of the crucified Christ (See *Lumen Gentium*, 3 and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 5). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 766, reaffirms Jn 19:34 as a symbol of the formation of the Church: “As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam’s side, so the Church was formed from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross.” The *Catechism* refers to St. Ambrose’s *In Luc 2*, 85–89 in a footnote. Even though Ambrose refers to the side of Christ, the *Catechism* sees this as an implicit reference to the heart of Christ.

The Church Fathers do not develop an explicit tradition of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The devotion to the pierced side of Christ, however, provides what Arthur McGratty S.J. calls “the stem from which one day would flower the devotion to the Sacred Heart” (McGratty 1951, p. 20). Hugo Rahner believes that, “The whole history of patristic teaching on the wound in Christ’s side can be summed up in a single formula: *fons vitae*” (H. Rahner 1957, p. 57).

Josef Stierli believes that during the first Christian millennium, the emphasis was on the pierced heart of Jesus pouring out blood and water “in its redemptive role, as the source of all the messianic treasures of salvation” (Stierli 1957, p. 60). During the Middle Ages, the Sacred Heart takes on a more “subjective, personal connotation; it means the whole

interior life of Jesus Christ, rooted in and unified by love and really symbolized by the pierced physical Heart" of the crucified Christ (Stierli 1957, pp. 59–60).

During the early Middle Ages, writers such as Saint Bede (637–735) and Alcuin (735–804) manifest devotion to the Heart of Jesus as a symbol of love and redemption (O'Donnell 2018, p. 85). St. Anselm (1033–1109) states, "The opening of the side of Christ reveals the riches of his love, the love of his Heart for us" (Stierli 1957, p. 63). St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) develops a "mysticism of the heart" in his commentary on the Canticles of Canticles (Stierli 1957, p. 64). Bernard has a deep devotion to the sacred humanity of Christ and the mysteries of the earthly lives of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. (McGratty 1951, p. 25). Other spiritual writers of his time, such as William of St. Thierry (1085–1148) and Richard of St. Victor (1110–1173) share Bernard's devotion to the heart of Jesus (Bainvel 1941, pp. 305–7; McGratty 1951, p. 25; Stierli 1957, p. 64).

During the thirteenth century, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus expanded and deepened. According to the *Legenda S. Franciscisci*, the heart of Francis of Assisi (c. 1181–1226) was deeply moved not only by the physical sufferings of Christ but also by "the Passion of his Heart" (Stierli 1957, p. 69). One of the apparitions of Margaret-Mary Alacoque took place on 4 October 1673, and "she recognized in St. Francis of Assisi, whose feast it was, one of the really great saints of the Sacred Heart" (Stierli 1957, p. 69). Devotion to the Heart of Christ is present in the writings of the Franciscan St. Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274), especially in *Lignum Vitae* and in the *Vitis Mystica*, a book attributed to him (Penzo 1950, p. 1059; Bainvel 1941, pp. 307–8; Stierli 1957, p. 69). St. Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280) interprets Jn 19:34 as a wound in the Heart of Jesus that allowed his blood "to give life to the Apostles and to set them on fire with His love" (McGratty 1951, p. 26). Albert also understands the heart in the spiritual sense, and he states that during Christ's agony in the garden, "a sword wounded his soul before the lance pierced his physical Heart" (Stierli 1957, p. 78, citing *In Matthaeum* pp. 26, 37). For Albert, the heart is a symbol of the love of Jesus, which moves him "to institute the Eucharist and suffer the piercing of his heart" (Stierli 1957, p. 79).

During the Middle Ages, the Heart of Jesus is extolled in the hymn, *Summi Regis Cor*, attributed to Blessed Herman Joseph (1150–1241). The hymn begins by saying "All hail to the Heart of our most high King," and it ends with "the bleeding and glorified Heart" becoming "a sanctuary into which the faithful long to enter" (O'Donnell 2018, p. 88).

In 2002, the [Congregation for Divine Worship](#) (2002) issued a *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*. This document summarizes devotion to the Sacred Heart during the Middle Ages as follows:

Devotion to the Sacred Heart was particularly strong during the middle ages. Many renowned for the learning and holiness developed and encouraged the devotion, among them St. Bernard (+1153), St. Bonaventure (+1274), the mystics St. Lutgarda (+1246), St Mathilda of Marburg (+1282), the sainted sisters Mathilda (+1299) and Gertrude (+1302) of the monastery of Helfta, and Ludolf of Saxony (+1380). These perceived in the Sacred Heart a "refuge" in which to recover, the seat of mercy, the encounter with him who is the source of the Lord's infinite love, the fount from which flows the Holy Spirit, the promised land, and true paradise ([Congregation for Divine Worship](#) 2002, no. 169).

The "sainted sisters" of the Benedictine monastery of Helfta—St. Mathilda and St. Gertrude the Great—deserve special mention. St. Mathilda (also spelled Matilda or Mechtilde) is the older blood sister of St. Gertrude. She is sometimes called Mathilda of Hackeborn or Mathilda of Helfta to distinguish her from St. Mathilda of Marburg (c. 1207–1282). In her book, *Liber Specialis Gratiae* (Book of Special Grace), Mathilda of Hackeborn tells how Jesus gave her his heart as a pledge of an eternal covenant (Bainvel 1941,

p. 309). She also relates how Jesus “opened the wound of his sweet Heart” and told her, “As the Father has loved me, so I love you” (Stierli 1957, p. 74). Jesus thus united his heart with the heart of Mathilda’s soul and “bestowed on her all the graces of contemplation, devotion and love” (Stierli 1957, p. 74).

For St. Gertrude—known as Gertrude the Great—divine love is personified in the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Bainvel 1941, p. 309). Both Mathilda of Hackeborn and Gertrude the Great are devoted to the physical heart of Jesus, but they both also see the Sacred Heart culminating in the symbolism of love (Bainvel 1941, p. 310). In her *Legatus Divinae Pietatis* (Ambassador of Divine Mercy) and *Exercitia Pietatis* (Exercises of Devotion), Gertrude provides some notable prayers to the Sacred Heart, and she also shows how the heart of Jesus is perpetually “the Heart of the Crucified, burning with love” (Stierli 1957, p. 76).

In the fourteenth century, St. Catherine of Siena (c. 1347–1380) “made an entire donation of her heart to her Divine Spouse and she obtained the Heart of Jesus in exchange” (Croiset 1988, p. 90). As the French Jesuit, Jean Croiset (1656–1738), reports, “from that time on she endeavored to live and act only according to the movements and inclinations of the Heart of Jesus” (Croiset 1988, p. 90). In his 24 October 2024 encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*, Pope mentions several other fourteenth century writers devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus including St. Angela of Foligno (1248–1309), Dame Julian of Norwich (c. 1343–1418), and Ludolph of Saxony (1300–1380), who found devotion to the Sacred Heart to be an excellent means of growing in intimacy with Christ. (Pope Francis 2024, no. 111).

To these we can add John Ruysbrock (1293–1381), Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471), and Bernardine of Siena (1380–1444), who, in a Good Friday sermon, speaks of the open side unlocking the Heart of Christ—“that Heart which loves us even unto death . . . this deep Heart, this silent Heart, this Heart that forgets nothing, this Heart that knows all, this Heart which loves us, and burns us with love” (Stierli 1957, p. 95; see also Stierli 1957, p. 93 on Ruysbrock and Stierli 1957, p. 94 on Thomas à Kempis).

In the Renaissance and early modern period, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus grew more prominent. In the sixteenth century, the Cathusian monk, Lanspergius (1489–1539), and the Benedictine, Blosius/Louis de Blois (1506–1566), gave the devotion an ascetical and mystical character (Bainvel 1941, p. 312). Blosius advised the faithful to seek refuge in the Sacred Heart during times of temptation, affliction, and misery in order to find mercy, consolation, and joy (Bainvel 1941, p. 312). In his *Epistolae Paroeneticae*, Lanspergius points to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the source of all graces:

Take great care to excite yourself by frequent acts of constant devotion to honor the admirable Heart of Jesus, all full of love and mercy for us. It is through It that you must ask for all you wish to obtain; it is by It and in It you must offer to the Eternal Father all that you do, because the Sacred Heart is the treasury of all supernatural gifts and all graces. It is, so to speak, the way by which we unite ourselves more closely to God, and by which God Himself communicates Himself more liberally to us . . . You should endeavor to unite yourself constantly to the Sacred Heart, wishing to have no other desires, no other sentiments than those of Jesus Christ, persuading yourself that His Spirit and His Sacred Heart will, so to speak, pass into yours and that of the two hearts there will no longer be two but one (Lanspergius, “The Exercise of Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus” from his *Epistolae Paroeneticae*; cited in Croiset, pp. 91–92).

Here, we see that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is presented as the preeminent way towards union with God. The Heart of Jesus, made possible by the Incarnation, enables the faithful to unite with God the Father in communion with the Holy Spirit. Union with the Holy Trinity is made possible by the Incarnation and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

St. Peter Canisius (d. 1597) and the early Jesuits were strong supporters of devotion to the Sacred Heart (Bainvel 1941, pp. 313–14; O'Donnell 2018, p. 110). St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) placed emphasis on the heart, and this provided an experiential foundation for the Society of Jesus' devotion to the Sacred Heart. As Pope Francis, himself a Jesuit, writes,

This same experience inspired the great succession of Jesuit priests who spoke explicitly of the heart of Jesus: Saint Francis Borgia, Saint Peter Faber, Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, Father Álvarez de Paz, Father Vincent Carafa, Father Kasper Družbicki and countless others. In 1883, the Jesuits declared that, "the Society of Jesus accepts and receives with an overflowing spirit of joy and gratitude the most agreeable duty entrusted to it by our Lord Jesus Christ to practice, promote and propagate devotion to his divine heart" (Pope Francis 2024, no. 146).

St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622), with his emphasis on the love of God, was deeply devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In a letter to St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1572–1641), the co-foundress of the Visitation Sisters, St. Francis suggested having as a symbol for their congregation "a single heart pierced by two arrows, and set in a crown of thorns . . . for truly our little Congregation is the work of the hearts of Jesus and Mary" (O'Donnell 2018, p. 115).

St. John Eudes (1601–1680), like St. Francis de Sales, recognized the union of the hearts of Jesus and Mary (Bainvel 1941, p. 317; Campbell 2024, pp. 299–321). He is best known for the work completed shortly before his death in 1680, *Le Coeur admirable de la très sacrée Mère de Dieu* (The Admirable Heart of the Most Sacred Mother of God, 1681).⁵ In this treatise, Eudes shows how the hearts of Jesus and Mary are so united in love that they really form one mystical heart (Thompson 1989, p. 328). Around 1668 or 1669, Eudes began to work on an Office and Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and on 28 October 1672, the first public celebration of the feast took place at Caen and in other French dioceses (Campbell 2024, p. 307). Beginning in 1672, the Feast of the Heart of Jesus began to be celebrated each year in the seminaries established by John Eudes (Lebrun 1924, p. 1470). The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was given approval by Pope Clement XIII in 1765 to the Bishops of Poland and the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart. Pius IX extended the Feast to the universal Church in 1856 (Stierli 1957, pp. 128–29).

The most outstanding promoter of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690), a Visitation (or Visitandine) sister living at her order's convent in Paray-le-Monial, France. Margaret Mary received revelations from Jesus concerning devotion to his Sacred Heart. The first of these apparitions occurred on December 27, 1673, the Feast of St. John the Evangelist (Croiset 1988, p. 35; Thomas 2021, p. 76; O'Donnell 2018, p. 127). Others continued periodically, culminating in the final apparition of June 1675. St. Margaret Mary describes her experience of 27 December 1673 as follows:

I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, when I felt myself wholly penetrated with that Divine Presence, but to such a degree that I lost all thought of myself and of the place where I was. He made me repose for a long time upon His Sacred Breast, where He disclosed to me the marvels of His love and the inexplicable secrets of His Sacred Heart (Thomas 2021, p. 77).

In the final apparition of June, 1675, Jesus shows Margaret Mary his divine Heart and says: Behold this Heart, Which has loved men so much, that It has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify to them its love; and in return I receive from the greater number nothing but ingratitude by reason of their irreverence and sacrileges, and by the coldness and contempt which they show Me in this Sacrament of Love. But what I feel the most keenly is

that it is the hearts which are consecrated to Me, that treat me thus. (then Jesus commanded her to have established a new Solemnity in the Church) Therefore, I ask of you that the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi be set apart for a special Feast to honor my Heart, by communicating, (or receiving Holy Communion) on that day and making reparation to me by a solemn act, in order to make amends for the indignities which I have received during the time I have been exposed on the altars. I promise you that My Heart shall expand Itself to shed in abundance the influence of Its divine love upon those who shall thus honor It, and cause It to be honored (Thomas 2021, p. 84).

In his 2024 encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis notes that what is fundamental to the apparitions received by St. Margaret Mary is Jesus's declaration of his great love for humanity. In the first apparition, Jesus says:

My divine Heart is so full of love for men, and for you in particular, that, no longer able to contain in itself the flames of its ardent charity, it must pour them out through you and be manifested to them, in order to enrich them with its precious treasures which I now reveal to you (Pope Francis 2024, no. 119; McGratty 1951, p. 83).

St. Margaret Mary's revelations were met with initial skepticism by some members of her religious community (Stierli 1957, p. 199; O'Donnell 2018, pp. 134, 137). This attitude changed, however, when the Jesuit St. Claude de La Colombière (1641–1682) served as the spiritual director at Paray-le-Monial from Feb. 2, 1675 to October, 1676. St. Claude believed in the authenticity of Margaret Mary's experiences. (Stierli 1957, pp. 122–23; O'Donnell 2018, pp. 132–34). St. Claude continued to correspond with Margaret Mary even when he was away in England. After the death of St. Claude in 1682, the apparitions to Margaret Mary were supported by the Jesuits Jean Croiset (1656–1738) and Joseph-François Gallifet (1663–1749) (McGratty 1951, pp. 129–31; O'Donnell 2018, pp. 145–48; Stierli 1957, pp. 123–26).

There was opposition, though, not only to the apparitions of Margaret-Mary but also to the devotion to the Sacred Heart itself. The Jansenists opposed the devotion for two main reasons. First, they resisted "the universal implications of Christ's love for all mankind in the revelations received by Margaret-Mary" (Oakes 2011, p. 294; O'Donnell 2018, p. 153). One of the Jansenist theses, which was condemned in 1653 by Innocent X, was that "it is Semipelagian to say that Christ died or shed his blood for all men without exception" (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 2005). The second objection was that adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus involved the worship of a created thing, i.e., the human heart of Jesus in isolation from his person (Oakes 2011, p. 291; O'Donnell 2018, p. 152).

There were others in the Church, though, who opposed the devotion because they thought it was a novelty (Stierli 1957, p. 126). This might have been the reason why Jean Croiset's 1691 book, *La Dévotion au Sacré-Coeur de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, was placed on the Index in 1704 (Stierli 1957, p. 124). Others, though, believe the book was placed on the Index because "the author, though in good faith, had omitted certain formalities required for a book dealing with such an important subject" (O'Connell 1988, xiv). In spite of this formal opposition, the devotion continued to grow. The Church's reaction to the new devotion was ambiguous. On the one hand, petitions to approve a public feast in honor of the Sacred Heart were rejected—as happened with respect to a 1729 petition of the King of Poland and some Polish bishops (Penzo 1950, p. 1062). On the other hand, "the Church gave lavish encouragement and fatherly support to the vigorous movement of Sacred Heart confraternities in the first half of the eighteenth century, by generous grants of indulgences and other privileges" (Stierli 1957, p. 126).

Despite opposition from the Jansenists and a posture of reserve on the part of the hierarchy, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus gradually gained ecclesial support. In

1765, Pope Clement XIII approved the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for Poland and the Archconfraternity in Rome (O'Donnell 2018, p. 151). In 1856, Pius IX extended the Feast to the universal Church (Verheyelzoon 1955, xxiii). Margaret Mary was beatified in 1884 and canonized in 1920. She is mentioned in the four major papal encyclicals on the Sacred Heart: Leo XIII's 1899 encyclical, *Annum Sacrum*; Pius XI's 1928 encyclical, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*; Pius XII's 1956 encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*; and Pope Francis's 2024 encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*.

In addition to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Pope Francis highlights the devotion to the Sacred Heart of several other saints, including St. Charles de Foucauld (1858–1916) and St. Thérèse of Lisieux 1873–1897). Mention should also be made of Blessed Marie of the Divine Heart (1863–1899), whose family name was Droste zu Vischering. She was a German Good Shepherd nun living in Porto, Portugal, who received several apparitions of Jesus (McGratty 1951, pp. 227–30; Stierli 1957, p. 129; O'Donnell 2018, p. 158). In these apparitions, Jesus asked her to write to Leo XIII requesting that he consecrate the world to his Sacred Heart (Thomas 2021, pp. 109–10; McGratty 1951, p. 228). In the second of these apparitions, Jesus revealed to her that Leo XIII would be healed of a disease that was threatening his life (Thomas 2021, p. 110; McGratty 1951, pp. 228–29). When the healing occurred, Pope Leo XIII responded to Maria's request (Thomas 2021, p. 110). In his May 25, 1899 encyclical, *Annum Sacrum*, he revealed his intention to consecrate the world to the Sacred Heart on June 11 of that year (Leo XIII 1899, *Annum Sacrum*, no. 14). In the encyclical, he refers to his being cured of a dangerous disease. He sent Marie a copy of the encyclical. She was most happy to know that the consecration would take place. She died, though, on 8 June 1899, three days before the consecration took place (Thomas 2021, p. 110).⁶

It was only in 1929, however, that Pius XI made the Feast of the Sacred Heart "obligatory for the universal Church" (Verheyelzoon 1955, xlivi). Permission, though, had been given to St. John Eudes in 1670 and 1671 to celebrate Mass and office in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus by several bishops (Campbell 2024, p. 307). During the eighteenth century, as we have seen, numerous confraternities devoted to the Sacred Heart were approved by bishops and popes. During his pontificate (1740–1758), Benedict XIV "granted over three hundred briefs establishing confraternities of the Sacred Heart" (O'Donnell 2018, p. 149).

4. The Christological Significance of Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Light of Papal Teachings

The first significant papal intervention in defense of Sacred Heart devotion was made by Pope Pius VI in his 1794 constitution, *Auctorem Fidei*. This constitution was directed at the errors of the 1786 Synod of Pistoia in Tuscany. This Synod was convoked by Bishop Scipione de' Ricci, who was a "staunch and ardent Jansenist" (O'Donnell 2018, p. 152). Jansenism was an extreme form of Augustinianism developed by Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638). It tended to overemphasize human depravity and the inability of the human will to resist grace. Many of the Jansenists also believed that Jesus died only for the elect and not for all human beings. Pope Innocent X censured five Jansenist theses in his 1653 constitution, *Cum occasione* (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, nos. 2001–2007). Later, many Jansenists challenged the adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, including Bishop Scipione de' Ricci, who convoked the Synod of Pistoia.

The Synod of Pistoia endorsed the Jansenist reasons against devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Synod believed this devotion was wrong because it gave divine worship to a creature. The Synod also believed that this devotion was a novelty, which was at least dangerous. Finally, it maintained that it was wrong "to adore the Heart of Christ, separate or apart from his divinity" (O'Donnell 2018, p. 152; Oakes 2011, pp. 291, 294).

In his 1794 constitution, *Auctorem Fidei*, Pope Pius VI responded to these objections. He defended the adoration of the Sacred Heart by appealing to the teaching of Constantinople II (553), which taught that there is “one and the same adoration by which the Word incarnate together with his own flesh is adored” (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 2661). Pius VI also noted that the Sacred Heart of Jesus can be adored with the cult of *latrīa* (the worship due to God alone) because the faithful who adore the Heart of Jesus are adoring “the Heart of the Person of the Word to whom it is inseparably united” (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 2663). According to Oakes, the Christological significance of Pius VI’s *Auctoren Fidei* is that, “by virtue of the communication of idioms, the human heart of Jesus is a divine heart, that is, the heart of the divine Person, who continues to suffer in his members” (Oakes 2011, p. 295).

Following this intervention by Pius VI, other ecclesial endorsements followed. In 1856, Pius IX extended the Feast of the Sacred Heart to the universal Church. In 1929, the Feast was made obligatory (Verheyelzoon 1955, xliii). The nineteenth century also saw the creation of new religious communities consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Mention should be made of the Society of the Sacred Heart founded by St. Madeleine Sophie Barat (1799–1865), the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, founded by Fr. André Coindre in 1821, and the Missionary Fathers of the Sacred Heart founded in Bourges, France, in 1843 (McGratty 1951, pp. 194–96).

In 1870, Bishop Felix Fournier of Nantes promoted the construction of a basilica dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus over Montmartre in Paris. Construction began in 1875 and finished in 1914. Arthur McGratty, S.J., believes that Montmartre “remains a glory of the Sacred Heart. It is the pride of the French Catholic, indeed of the Catholic in every part of the world” (McGratty 1951, p. 209).

The next papal intervention was Leo XIII’s 1899 encyclical, *Annum Sacrum*, which announced the forthcoming consecration of the world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In doing so, Leo XIII also stressed Christ’s dominion over the whole human race. He likewise recognized the Sacred Heart as “the sensible image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ which moves us to love one another” (Leo XIII 1899, no. 8). In addition to the letters of Blessed Maria of the Divine Heart, the encyclical was motivated by a desire to offset some of the secularizing trends in society. After his election to the papacy in 1878, “the new Pontiff did not delay to indicate to the world his full realization of the evils besetting human society in its progress through two preceding centuries” (McGratty 1951, p. 225). He was worried about the spread of secularism, rationalism, and positivism, and he believed there was a need for an appeal to God as a “positive remedy to the evils of the times” (McGratty 1951, pp. 226–27). In *Annum Sacrum*, Leo XIII clearly sees consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as an appeal to resist the perceived evils of the world. As he writes:

Hence that abundance of evils which have now for a long time settled upon the world, and which pressingly call upon us to seek for help from Him by whose strength alone they can be driven away. Who can He be but Jesus Christ the Only-begotten Son of God? (Leo XIII 1899, *Annum Sacrum*, no. 11).

In his prayer of consecration of the world to the Sacred Heart, Leo XIII’s desire to offset the evils of the world is likewise present:

Many indeed have never known Thee; many too, despising Thy precepts, have rejected Thee. Have mercy on them all, most merciful Jesus, and draw them to Thy Sacred Heart. Be Thou King, O Lord, not only of the faithful who have never forsaken Thee, but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned Thee; grant that they may quickly return to Thy Father’s house lest they die of wretchedness and hunger. Be Thou King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions, or

whom discord keeps aloof, and call them back to the harbor of truth and unity of faith, so that there may be but one flock and one Shepherd (Thomas 2021, p. 114).

In 1928, Pius XI issued his encyclical, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, which explores the meaning of reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This encyclical was issued three years after Pius XI's 1925 encyclical, *Quas Primas*, which introduced the Feast of Christ the King (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, nos. 3675–3679). Pius XI clearly believed in the Kingship of Christ over the world, as did Leo XIII. Pius XI, though, believed that the evils of the world should be overcome not simply by consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus but also by reparation to his heart. In connection with *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, Pius XI provides a new prayer of consecration, "a prayer concerned with reparation" that "asks that atonement be made for the shamelessness and licentiousness of men, for the desecration of Sundays and Holydays, the blasphemies against God, the neglect of the sacraments" (Stierli 1957, pp. 167–68). Thus, Pius XI highlights reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus—something stressed in the apparitions to Margaret-Mary Alacoque—whereas Leo XIII is more concerned with consecration.

In 1956, Pius XII published his encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*, which highlights the three-fold love expressed by the Sacred Heart of Jesus: divine love, the burning love infused into Christ's soul, and the sensible love of a human heart with human emotions and feelings. He also explains why, in light of the hypostatic union, Christ's heart is worthy of *latraria*, the worship due to God alone. *Haurietis Aquas* is more explicitly Christological than *Annum Sacrum* and *Miserentissimus Redemptor*. This is not to say that the two prior encyclicals lacked Christological significance. *Haurietis Aquas*, however, reflects a desire to respond to Christological errors reemerging in the mid-20th century. In his 1950 encyclical, *Humani Generis*, Pius XII responded to dangerous trends in philosophy and theology that threatened the Catholic faith (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, nos. 3875–3899). In his 1951 encyclical, *Sempiternus Rex*—published on the 1500th anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon—he expressed concern about new trends in Christology that emphasize "the state and condition of Christ's human nature to such an extent as to make it seem as something existing in its own right and not as subsisting in the Word itself" (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 3905). *Haurietis Aquas*, like *Sempiternus Rex*, reflects a similar concern for a precise understanding of the Council of Chalcedon and how it affects the worship of the sacred humanity of Christ (Oakes 2011, p. 295). *Haurietis Aquas* likewise builds upon Pius XII's 1943 encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*, on the Mystical Body of Christ. As Edward Oakes observes, Pius XII shows how "devotion to the Sacred Heart brings back to the foreground this important point: Christ's ongoing *human* concern and involvement in his members, the church" (Oakes 2011, p. 295; emphasis in original).

On 24 October 2025, Pope Francis published his encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*, in commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the apparitions given to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Pope Francis provides a detailed history of devotion to the Sacred Heart, and he also explains how reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is expressed by love and service to others. In this respect, his understanding of reparation differs somewhat from that of Pius XI, who stressed reparation as a means of atoning for the offenses against Christ and the Catholic faith.

In light of these and other papal writings, the Christological significance of devotion to the Sacred Heart can be summarized under the following nine categories.

4.1. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Is Grounded in the Hypostatic Union of the Divine and Human Natures in the Single Person of Christ

Both the Council of Ephesus (431) and the Council of Chalcedon affirmed the truth of the hypostatic union (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, nos. 251 and 302). The hypostatic

union recognizes that Jesus Christ, as the only begotten Son of God, “must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation” (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 302). The Council of Chalcedon made it clear that,

The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one Person and one hypostasis. He is not split or divided into two Persons, but he is one and the same only begotten Son, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as formerly the prophets and later Jesus Christ himself have taught us and has been handed down to us by the creed of the Fathers (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 302).

Because of the hypostatic union, the Council of Constantinople II (553) taught that there is a single act of worship directed to “God the Word made flesh together with his own flesh” (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 431). In other words, there is not one act of worship directed to Christ’s divinity and another to his humanity. Because of the hypostatic union, Christ’s human nature—which includes his heart—is to be adored with the worship that is due to God alone (*latria*). This is because his human heart is united hypostatically to the divine Word (see Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, p. 251). Christ’s human heart is the heart assumed by a divine Person, and it has no other subject than the Person of the divine Word.

In his 1956 encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*, Pius XII explains “why the Church gives the highest form of worship (*cultum latriae*) to the Heart of the divine Redeemer” (Pius XII 1956, no. 21). One major reason for the worship of the Heart of Jesus is the hypostatic union. Because of this union, all the sacred members of the Body of Christ are united to his divine hypostasis. According to Pius XII, this means that

... we recognize that His Heart, the noblest part of human nature, is hypostatically united to the Person of the divine Word. Consequently, there must be paid to it that worship of adoration (*latriae cultum*) with which the Church honors the Person of the Incarnate Son of God Himself. We are dealing here with an article of faith, for it has been solemnly defined in the general Council of Ephesus and the second Council of Constantinople (Pius XII 1956, no. 21; Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 3922).

4.2. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Reminds Us of the Infinite Love of Jesus Christ for Humanity

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a symbol of the boundless love of God for the human race. Because Jesus is confessed to be “God from God, light from light, true God from true God” in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (Denzinger and Hünermann 2012, no. 150), his Sacred Heart embodies and symbolizes the infinite love of God for humanity. Pope Leo XIII expresses this belief in his 1899 encyclical, *Annum Sacrum*:

And since there is in the Sacred Heart a symbol and a sensible image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ which moves us to love one another, therefore is it fit and proper that we should consecrate ourselves to His most Sacred Heart—an act which is nothing else than an offering and a binding of oneself to Jesus Christ, seeing that whatever honor, veneration and love is given to this divine Heart is really and truly given to Christ Himself (Leo XIII 1899, no. 8).

Pius XII also teaches that the Heart of Jesus, “more than all the other members of His body, is the natural sign and symbol of His boundless love for the human race” (Pius XII 1956, no. 22). He also explains how the Sacred Heart of Jesus embodies a threefold love:

For these reasons, the Heart of the Incarnate Word is deservedly and rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that threefold love with which the divine Redeemer unceasingly loves His eternal Father and all mankind.

It is a symbol of that divine love that He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit but which He, the Word made flesh, alone manifests through a weak and perishable body, since “in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9). (52).

It is, besides, the symbol of that burning love which, infused into His soul, enriches the human will of Christ and enlightens and governs its acts by the most perfect knowledge derived both from the beatific vision and that which is directly infused (53).

And finally—and this in a more natural and direct way—it is the symbol also of sensible love, since the body of Jesus Christ, formed by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, possesses full powers of feelings and perception, in fact, more so than any other human body (Pius XII 1956, nos. 54–57).

The Sacred Heart of Jesus embodies a love that is divine, spiritual, and sensible. It is a love that is fully divine and fully human. It expresses an incarnate love, the love of God in the flesh. Pope Paul VI describes the Sacred Heart as a “burning furnace of love” and “the symbol and express image of that eternal love by which God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son” [Jn 3:16] (Paul VI 1965, AAS 57, pp. 299–300).

4.3. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Deepens Our Appreciation of the Humanity of Christ

The Second Vatican Council, in its *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes*, underscores the humanity of Christ with these words:

For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin (Vatican II 1965, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22).

Because of the Incarnation, God can love us with a human heart, which is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pius XII notes that,

The human heart of Jesus allowed him to love with human emotions. Nothing, then, was wanting to the human nature which the Word of God united to Himself. Consequently He assumed it in no diminished way, in no different sense in what concerns the spiritual and the corporeal: that is, it was endowed with intellect and will and the other internal and external faculties of perception, and likewise with the desires and all the natural impulses of the senses (Pius XII 1956, no. 40).

Pius XII also explains how the hypostatic union enabled the divine Word to love us with true human emotions and not only with the infinite love that is shared with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Because of the hypostatic union, this divine love becomes incarnate with a physical heart and a human will:

Hence, since there can be no doubt that Jesus Christ received a true body and had all the affections proper to the same, among which love surpassed all the rest, it is likewise beyond doubt that He was endowed with a physical heart like ours; for without this noblest part of the body the ordinary emotions of human life are impossible. Therefore the Heart of Jesus Christ, hypostatically united to the divine Person of the Word, certainly beat with love and with the other emotions—but these, joined to a human will full of divine charity and to the infinite love itself which the Son shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit, were in such complete unity and agreement that never among these three loves was there any contradiction of or disharmony (Pius XII 1956, no. 41).

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, therefore, is devotion to the Incarnate Word, who loves us with true human emotions and a true human will.

4.4. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Moves Us to Love Christ and Others More Deeply

The appropriate human response to love is to love in return. In consideration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with a Cross shining above it, Pius XI asks:

For is not the sum of all religion and therefore the pattern of more perfect life, contained in that most auspicious sign and in the form of piety that follows from it inasmuch as it more readily leads the minds of men to an intimate knowledge of Christ Our Lord, and more efficaciously moves their hearts to love Him more vehemently and to imitate Him more closely? ([Pius XI 1928](#), no. 3).

Pius XI likewise says that Jesus

showed His Heart to us bearing about it the symbols of the passion and displaying the flames of love, that from the one we might know the infinite malice of sin, and in the other we might admire the infinite charity of Our Redeemer, and so might have a more vehement hatred of sin, and make a more ardent return of love for His love" ([Pius XI 1928](#), no. 11).

The Sacred Heart of Jesus not only moves us to love Him more deeply; it also moves us to love others more fervently. Pope Francis shows how this response of love has a Scriptural basis:

We need once more to take up the word of God and to realize, in doing so, that our best response to the love of Christ's heart is to love our brothers and sisters. There is no greater way for us to return love for love. The Scriptures make this patently clear:

"Just as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" ([Mt 25:40](#)).

"For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" ([Gal 5:14](#)).

"We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death" ([1 Jn 3:14](#)).

"Those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" ([1 Jn 4:20](#)) ([Pope Francis 2024](#), no. 167).

4.5. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Is Linked to the Divine Mercy

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is an expression of Divine Mercy. The Latin word for mercy is *misericordia*, which means to have compassion in the heart (*misereor in cordis*). Devotion to Divine Mercy, in fact, "can be considered part of devotion to the Sacred Heart" ([O'Donnell 2018](#), p. 251). In his 1980 encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, John Paul made this connection explicit:

The Church seems in a singular way to profess the mercy of God and to venerate it when she directs herself to the Heart of Christ. In fact, it is precisely this drawing close to Christ in the mystery of his Heart which enables us to dwell on this point of the revelation of the merciful love of the Father, a revelation that constituted the central content of the messianic mission of the Son of Man ([John Paul II 1980a](#), no. 13).

Devotion to the Divine Mercy is focused on the merciful love of God the Father. The Heart of Jesus incarnates this merciful love in a tangible way. The Heart of Jesus is the Heart of Divine Mercy.

4.6. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Highlights the Paschal Mystery and the Origin of the Church

As we have seen, during the Patristic Age, devotion to the Heart of Jesus was focused on the wounded side of Christ. The Heart of Christ is the Heart pierced for our offenses on Mount Calvary. During the 1981 International Congress on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger offered these reflections:

All of this comes to show that Christian piety must involve the senses, which receive their order and unity from the heart, and also the feelings, which have their seat in the heart. It is clear that such piety, centered in the heart, corresponds to the image of the Christian God, who has a heart. It is also clear that all of this is, in the end, an expression and an application of the *mysterium paschale*, which is where we find the recapitulation of the story of God's love for man (Ratzinger 1985, p. 156).

God's love is manifested in a supreme way by the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. From the open wound of Christ's side there also emerged the Church. Pius XII highlights this reality:

Under the influence of this love, our Savior, by the outpouring of His blood, became wedded to His Church: "By love, He allowed Himself to be espoused to His Church." Hence, from the wounded Heart of the Redeemer was born the Church, the dispenser of the Blood of the Redemption—whence flows that plentiful stream of Sacramental grace from which the children of the Church drink of eternal life, as we read in the sacred liturgy: "From the pierced Heart, the Church, the Bride of Christ, is born... And He pours forth grace from His Heart." (Pius XII 1956, no. 76).

The wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a reminder of his redemptive love. Pius XII states that "the wound of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, now that He has completed His mortal life, remains through the course of the ages a striking image of that spontaneous charity by which God gave His only begotten Son for the redemption of men and by which Christ expressed such passionate love for us that He offered Himself as a bleeding victim on Calvary for our sake: 'Christ loved us and delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness' (Eph 5:2)" (Pius XII 1956, no. 78).

4.7. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus Opens the Way to Acts of Reparation by the Members of Christ's Body, the Church

In the June 1675 apparition of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Jesus asked that the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi be set apart for a special Feast to honor his Heart. He also asked for the faithful to receive Holy Communion on that day in order to make reparation for the indignities He has received during the time in which He was exposed on the altars. In his 1928 encyclical, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, Pius XI refers to this apparition, and he also explains how reparation is intimately linked to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

And truly the spirit of expiation or reparation has always had the first and foremost place in the worship given to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and nothing is more in keeping with the origin, the character, the power, and the distinctive practices of this form of devotion, as appears from the record of history and custom, as well as from the sacred liturgy and the acts of the Sovereign Pontiffs (Pius XI 1928, no. 12).

How, though, can the faithful make reparation for offenses against the Sacred Heart of Jesus? The answer is found in the will of Christ to have the members of his Mystical Body share in his work of expiation. Pius XI offers this explanation:

To this it may be added that the expiatory passion of Christ is renewed and in a manner continued and fulfilled in His mystical body, which is the Church. For, to use once more the words of St. Augustine, “Christ suffered whatever it behoved Him to suffer; now nothing is wanting of the measure of the sufferings. Therefore the sufferings were fulfilled, but in the head; there were yet remaining the sufferings of Christ in His body” (In *Psalm lxxxvi*). This, indeed, Our Lord Jesus Himself vouchsafed to explain when, speaking to Saul, “as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter” (*Acts ix*, 1), He said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (*Acts ix*, 5), clearly signifying that when persecutions are stirred up against the Church, the Divine Head of the Church is Himself attacked and troubled. Rightly, therefore, does Christ, still suffering in His mystical body, desire to have us partakers of His expiation, and this is also demanded by our intimate union with Him, for since we are “the body of Christ and members of member” (*1 Corinthians 12*, 27), whatever the head suffers, all the members must suffer with it (Cf. *1 Corinthians xii*, 26) ([Pius XI 1928](#), no. 14).

Reparation to the Sacred Heart, therefore, is grounded in the intimate union of the faithful with Christ and his redemptive sacrifice. Pius XI appeals to *Colossians 1:24*, but he makes it clear that the acts of reparation on the part of the faithful depend on the sacrifice of Christ:

Yet, though the copious redemption of Christ has abundantly forgiven us all offenses (Cf. *Colossians ii*, 13), nevertheless, because of that wondrous divine dispensation whereby those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ are to be filled up in our flesh for His body which is the Church (Cf. *Colossians i*, 24), to the praises and satisfactions, “which Christ in the name of sinners rendered unto God” we can also add our praises and satisfactions, and indeed it behoves us so to do. But we must ever remember that the whole virtue of the expiation depends on the one bloody sacrifice of Christ, which without intermission of time is renewed on our altars in an unbloody manner, “For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different” (*Council of Trent*, Session XXIII, Chapter 2) ([Pius XI 1928](#), no. 9).

John Paul II, in his 1984 apostolic letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, explains that Christ’s suffering was absolutely sufficient for redemption. Nevertheless, Christ wished to open up his suffering to all human suffering:

The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world’s redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite. No man can add anything to it. But at the same time, in the mystery of the Church as his Body, Christ has in a sense opened his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering. In so far as man becomes a sharer in Christ’s sufferings—in any part of the world and at any time in history—to that extent *he in his own way completes* the suffering through which Christ accomplished the Redemption of the world.

Does this mean that the Redemption achieved by Christ is not complete? No. It only means that the Redemption, accomplished through satisfactory love, *remains always open to all love* expressed in *human suffering*. In this dimension—the dimension of love—the Redemption, which has already been completely accomplished, is, in a certain sense,

constantly being accomplished. Christ achieved the Redemption completely and to the very limits, but at the same time, he did not bring it to a close. In this redemptive suffering, through which the Redemption of the world was accomplished, Christ opened himself from the beginning to every human suffering and constantly does so ([John Paul II 1984](#), 11 February, no. 24).

In his General Audience of 8 April 2009, Benedict XVI quotes the French writer, Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), to remind us that Jesus continues to suffer in all those who suffer on Earth:

Christ's death recalls the accumulated sorrow and evils that weigh upon humanity of every age: the crushing weight of our death, the hatred and violence that still today stain the earth with blood. The Passion of the Lord continues in the suffering of human beings. As Blaise Pascal has rightly written: "Jesus will be in agony even to the end of the world. We must not sleep during that time" (*Pensées*, p. 553). If Good Friday is a day full of sorrow, it is therefore at the same time a particularly propitious day to reawaken our faith, to consolidate our hope and courage so that each one of us may carry our cross with humility, trust and abandonment in God, certain of his support and his victory. The liturgy of this day sings: *O Crux, ave, spes unica* Hail, O Cross, our only hope! ([Benedict XVI 2009](#)).

Although reparation is an important aspect of devotion to the Sacred Heart, Pope Francis has warned not to understand it "primarily in terms of accumulating sacrifices and good works" ([Pope Francis 2024](#), no. 138). Instead, "our acts of love, service and reconciliation, in order to be truly reparative, need to be inspired, motivated and empowered by Christ" ([Pope Francis 2024](#), no. 184). True acts of reparation "need the life, the fire and the light that radiate from the heart of Christ" ([Pope Francis 2024](#), no. 184).

4.8. Devotion to the Sacred Heart Is Linked to the Eucharist

Pope Pius XII understood the Eucharist as a gift of the Sacred Heart of Jesus because it is a gift of his love. As he writes,

Fervent devotional practice towards the Heart of Jesus will beyond all doubt foster and advance devotion to the Holy Cross in particular, and love for the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. We can even assert—as the revelations made by Jesus Christ to St. Gertrude and to St. Margaret Mary clearly show—that no one really ever has a proper understanding of Christ crucified to whom the inner mysteries of His Heart have not been made known. Nor will it be easy to understand the strength of the love which moved Christ to give Himself to us as our spiritual food save by fostering in a special way the devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, the purpose of which is—to use the words of Our predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII—"to call to mind the act of supreme love whereby our Redeemer, pouring forth all the treasures of His Heart in order to remain with us till the end of time, instituted the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist." For "not the least part of the revelation of that Heart is the Eucharist, which He gave to us out of the great charity of His own Heart." ([Pius XII 1956](#), no. 122).

John Paul II, during a 1 June 1980 meditation at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre in Paris, emphasized the intimate connection between the Eucharist and the Sacred Heart:

We are not only called to meditate and contemplate this mystery of Christ's love; we are called to take part in it. It is the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, the center of our faith, the center of our worship of Christ's merciful love manifested in his Sacred Heart ([John Paul II 1980b](#), 1 June, no. 4).

4.9. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Allows for Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

St. John Eudes (1601–1680) is best known for his doctrine of the mystical union of the hearts of Jesus and Mary expressed in his work, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*. He sees Mary's heart as formed by hearts of the three divine Persons: "Jesus, who is heart of his Father, as well as the divine Spirit, who is the heart of the Father and the Son, have been given to [Mary] to be the spirit of her spirit, the soul of her soul and the heart of her heart" (Thompson 1989, p. 328). Eudes also speaks of the three hearts of Mary: her bodily heart, her spiritual heart, and her divine heart, which is the heart of Jesus living in her. He says that these three hearts "are but a single heart through the most holy and intimate bond that ever existed or will exist, next to the hypostatic union" (Thompson 1989, p. 329). Eudes composed a Mass and Office in honor of the heart of Mary, and in 1643, he received permission from the local bishop to celebrate the feast privately for his community.

The intimate union of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary is one reason why Pius XII, in his 1956 encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas* (1956), sees the Heart of Mary as a gift of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Although he might not fully embrace Eudes' understanding of the unions of the two hearts, Pius XII certainly believes it is appropriate to join devotion to the Heart of Mary to devotion to the Heart of Jesus. As he explains:

Another most precious gift of His Sacred Heart is, as We have said, Mary the beloved Mother of God and the most loving Mother of us all. She who gave birth to our Savior according to the flesh and was associated with Him in recalling the children of Eve to the life of divine grace has deservedly been hailed as the spiritual Mother of the whole human race (Pius XII 1956, no. 72).

In the same encyclical, he encourages the faithful to join devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

In order that favors in greater abundance may flow on all Christians, nay, on the whole human race, from the devotion to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, let the faithful see to it that to this devotion the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God is closely joined. For, by God's Will, in carrying out the work of human Redemption the Blessed Virgin Mary was inseparably linked with Christ in such a manner that our salvation sprang from the love and the sufferings of Jesus Christ to which the love and sorrows of His Mother were intimately united. It is, then, entirely fitting that the Christian people—who received the divine life from Christ through Mary—after they have paid their debt of honor to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should also offer to the most loving Heart of their heavenly Mother the corresponding acts of piety affection, gratitude and expiation (Pius XII 1956, no. 124).

In his 2024 encyclical, *Dilexit Nos* (2024), Pope Francis explains that devotion to the Heart of Mary does not detract from the sole worship due to the Heart of Jesus:

Devotion to the heart of Mary in no way detracts from the sole worship due the heart of Christ, but rather increases it: "Mary's function as mother of humanity in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power". Thanks to the abundant graces streaming from the open side of Christ, in different ways the Church, the Virgin Mary and all believers become themselves streams of living water. In this way, Christ displays his glory in and through our littleness (Pope Francis 2024, no. 176).

Because the physical heart of Jesus is part of the human nature assumed from the Blessed Virgin Mary, the union of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary is profound and intimate.

5. Summary and Conclusions

This article has explored the biblical roots of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and how this devotion developed in the history of the Catholic Church. It has also examined papal teachings on devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Christological implications of these teachings. Although devotion to the Heart of Jesus has scriptural and Patristic roots, it develops more fully in the second millennium of Catholic history. We might ask why this is so. I believe it is because the Incarnation is not simply a means to overcome sin and death but an expression of God's love. As we have seen, mystical writers understood the Heart of Jesus as a means of uniting with God in love. God is not simply the Almighty Creator but a divine Person with a human heart who can unite his heart to those who love him.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an expression of authentic Christology. Because of the hypostatic union, the human Heart of Jesus can be adored with *latria*, the worship due to God alone. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus is grounded in the scriptural recognition of the heart as the deepest core of the human person. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus has been present since the early Church, but it became more prominent following the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690). There have been four papal encyclicals on devotion to the Sacred Heart, and all four mention St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus emphasizes God's infinite love and the human nature of Christ. It inspires the faithful to respond to this love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is also linked to other Catholic themes and practices such as the Paschal Mystery, reparation, the Eucharist, and devotion to the Heart of Mary.

Christology is central to Catholic theology, but it should not be reduced to abstract discussions of "person" and "natures." Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus shows how the human need for love is at the heart of Christology. God responds to this need by means of the Incarnation so that He can love human beings with a love that is truly human and truly divine.

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- ¹ Unless otherwise noted, the biblical references are from the *New American Bible* with some minor adjustments. When the Vulgate Latin is cited, the translations are mine. The Latin Vulgate version used is the *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, edited by R.P. Alberto Colunga, O.P., and Dr. Laurentio Turrado (Madrid: Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos, 1946).
- ² The references are to Moell's collection of John Paul II's teachings on the Sacred Heart. Most of these addresses can be found on the Vatican website.
- ³ My translation for the Italian, which reads, "Gli elementi costitutivi del culto al S.C. di G. sono contenuti sostanzialmente nella Rivalazione."
- ⁴ The original Latin of the cited text from Pius XII's 1956 encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*, reads, "Haurietis aquas in gaudio de fontibus Salvatoris » (Is. 12, 3), which can be translated literally as "You will draw waters in joy from the fountains of the Savior;" see AAS 48 (1956), p. 309. The Clementine Vulgate translates Jn 7:38 as "Qui credit in me, sicut dicit Scriptura, flumina de ventre eius fluent aquae vivae." The Latin translation of *koilia* is *ventre* from *venter/ventris*, which means "womb, stomach, entrails, belly, bowels." See Leo F. Stelton, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin* (Peabody, MA: Henrickson Publishing, 1995), p. 283.
- ⁵ Details about this work of Eudes can be found in Thompson (1989, pp. 52–53). The text can be found in volumes 6–8 of *Oeuvres complètes du vénérable Jean Eudes* 12 volumes, edited by Joseph Dauphin and Charles LeBrun (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1905–1911).

6 Thomas gives the day of the consecration as 10 June 1899. In *Annum Sacrum*, no. 14, though, Leo XIII specifies June 11 as the day of the consecration. Thomas does, however, give the correct date for the death of Blessed Maria of the Divine Heart, viz., 8 June 1899.

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