





STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS



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## **Symbols, Devotions and Jesuits**

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## THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

A group of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

The Seminar studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material which it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, laity, men and/or women. Hence the *Studies*, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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## SYMBOLS, DEVOTIONS AND JESUITS

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## For Your Information . . .

Justification—and not by faith but by software. The eye of the reader will probably recognize in this issue another improvement in the appearance of the printed page of *Studies*. Up until now our own computer software for “typesetting” could give us even margins only for the left-hand side of a page; the length of the lines of type varied and as a result the right-hand side looked somewhat ragged. One of the benefits of the onward march of technology (and you have read in an earlier issue about some of its problems) is new computer software which produces for us what is called “right justification.” The resultant good works are evident in this issue.

Another improvement comes from suggestions from several readers: “Why don’t you tell us a little more about a *Studies* author than simply name and address?” Here is the response, threefold for this issue. James M. Hayes, S.J., a member of the New England province, did theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and has just completed his first year as assistant chaplain and member of the campus ministry team at Fairfield University (Fairfield, CT 06430). His contribution to this issue arises out of work which he did at Berkeley for his licentiate degree in theology. John M. Staudenmaier, S.J., of the Wisconsin Province, is presently a member of the Seminar and is familiar to our readers for his earlier contribution to *Studies*, “United States Technology and Adult Commitment.” He is professor of the history of technology at the University of Detroit (Lansing-Reilly Hall, 4001 W. McNichols Rd., Detroit MI 48221) and regularly visiting professor of the same subject at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. John W. Padberg, S.J., of the Missouri Province is Director of the Institute of Jesuit Sources (3700 W. Pine Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108) and Chairman of the Seminar on the Spirituality of Jesuits which produces these issues of *Studies*.

This journal would not be what it is without the members of the Seminar on the Spirituality of Jesuits and the dedication which they

bring to its work. What was said in an earlier issue of *Studies* about them and the five times a year between September and May in which they gather for a long weekend bears repeating here: "This is a large commitment of time from men who already have a full week of work behind them and another to look forward to. With travel the commitment regularly adds up to fifteen days in nine months." Three of those men have just completed their membership on the Seminar. Roger Haight, of the New York Province, who teaches at Regis College, the Jesuit School of Theology in Toronto, Canada, and J. J. Mueller, of the Missouri Province, who teaches on the faculty of theology at St. Louis University, have finished the usual three-year terms on the Seminar. John Staudenmaier, who was identified earlier in these comments, added another year to his original three. In the name of the Seminar and, I am sure, in your name too, I wish to thank them for everything they have done for all of us.

In September, three new men will join us. I shall introduce them in that issue of *Studies*. The subject of the issue itself will be Jesuit education and Jesuit spirituality and the author of the essay is Arthur McGovern, S.J., of Detroit University. The Seminar hopes that it will provide material for thought and discussion in the months leading up to the celebration next summer of two hundred years of Jesuit education in the United States.

**John W. Padberg, S.J.**

**Editor**

*Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*

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## SYMBOLS, DEVOTIONS AND JESUITS

James M. Hayes, S.J.

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### INTRODUCTION:

#### "AN ALTOGETHER HAPPY RESPONSIBILITY" (JWP)

An extraordinary commission to the Society of Jesus and a lengthy and spirited discussion among the members of the Seminar on the Spirituality of Jesuits provoked this issue of *Studies*. As the discussion began, the members were not in agreement, nor were they as it ended, except on one matter. They thought that the subject of this essay well merited treatment in *Studies*. That treatment, here presented, comes from several sources. They include an originally lengthy paper submitted to the Seminar, a set of reflections sent to the editor more than a year ago for whatever use he judged appropriate, comments suggested by the seminar members, a paper occasioned by that spirited discussion mentioned above and the contribution of the editor himself. But finally, everything here goes back to and is occasioned by the anniversary of that commission which involved an event, a symbol and a devotion.

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\* The addresses of the authors are found in the "For your information" pages preceding the table of contents.

This year, 1988, is the three-hundredth anniversary of a responsibility given to the Society of Jesus which strongly shaped the prayer and devotional life of the Society and, through it, that same life of the Church. The whole Society, every Jesuit province, hundreds of religious congregations of men and women, whole nations, the universal church, and the spontaneous piety of individual Catholics all over the world have been marked by the consequences of that event. After almost three centuries, however, those prayer and devotional consequences in many parts of the Church and among many people, including Jesuits, have suffered in the last quarter-century a rapid and marked and, to some, an inexplicable decline. What was the commission? What followed from it? What might be reasons, general and particular, for the circumstances of the last twenty-five years? How do at least some contemporary Jesuits respond to that commission? All of these questions and their answers, some clear, some tentative, and many of their broader implications are the subject of this issue of *Studies*.

The extraordinary commission, given to the Society of Jesus on July 2, 1688, in a revelation to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation nun, was that the Society was to take on the responsibility of promoting and spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. If up until now in this essay the term "Sacred Heart of Jesus" has not been mentioned, the reason was precisely not to lose the reader, because this devotion for many people, including many Jesuits, has seemed for the past two decades or so to be of little or no interest. Yet the Society itself in the past in one of its general congregations has acknowledged this "altogether happy responsibility" (*munus suavissimum*), and in the present some of the most widely read, respected and, indeed, loved Jesuits such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner and Pedro Arrupe publicly acknowledged their profound and continuing devotion to the Heart of Christ. More importantly, all over the world, in so many places and circumstances, from the barrios of Manila to Montmartre in Paris, from the thou-

sands of charismatics who gather at Paray-le-Monial every summer to the unending stream of correspondence to the Sacred Heart Program and the millions of monthly leaflets of the Apostleship of Prayer around the world, it is clear that the symbol and the devotion still strike a deep and lasting chord in many members of the Church.

This issue of *Studies*, then, brings together three written contributions. The first contribution sets a context for devotional life today in the Church in the United States. It is worth keeping in mind as a general American background to our further consideration of the particular devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A seminar member, John Staudenmaier, wrote it. The second, by John Padberg, includes this introduction, notes on the sources and history of the devotion, some of the flavor and substance of that “spirited discussion” by Seminar members and, with a special debt of gratitude to John A. McGrail of the Detroit Province, material which originally called attention to this three-hundredth anniversary. The third contribution, reflections on a special instance of such symbol and devotion—the Sacred Heart and Arrupe, Teilhard de Chardin and Rahner—comes from an essay by James Hayes.

#### **SOME REFLECTIONS ON DEVOTIONAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATE (JMS)**

Most Friday nights during my high school years, some friends and I attended the Sorrowful Mother Novena at St. Joseph’s Church in Marinette, Wisconsin, before heading off to the movies. We teased about the hopelessly saccharine hymn, “Good Night, Sweet Jesus,” with which the service regularly ended but no one forced us to go. The weekly act of piety seemed good to us, an ordinary part of 1950s Catholic life. We were not altogether strange, I think, although some fellow devotees might have questioned our regular juxtaposition of



church and movie theatre. American Catholics were given, in considerable numbers, to a host of similar forms of prayer: The Nine First Fridays of the Sacred Heart, The Miraculous Medal, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, The Novena of Grace in Honor of St. Francis Xavier, even weekly Benediction on Sundays. They all manifested a vigorous form of Catholic life that normally goes under the heading of "popular devotions."

In this year which marks the three-hundredth anniversary of a tradition long held dear by Jesuits, promoting the Sacred Heart devotion, we find ourselves in cultural circumstances sharply different from those of my teenage years. Apart from ashes on Ash Wednesday and palms on Palm Sunday, both during Lent, the traditional Catholic observances so popular then have fallen from favor almost everywhere in the United States. It is important to address the issue summarized in the title of this number of *Studies*, not simply to honor the anniversary of the commission to the Society to promote the devotion to the Heart of Christ, but also to explore the place of popular devotions in American Catholic life as we approach the century's end. The question is important for readers of *Studies*. Jesuits, it is sometimes observed, can drift into an uncritical elitism when it comes to the ordinary prayer life of common people. We often see ourselves as committed to global vision and theological reflection. While others tend the pastoral center of church life, we are called to the margins of Catholic experience ("to go anywhere in the world for the good of souls") where disparate economic classes and cultures rub against one another. Fostering popular devotions, which express the local and the ordinary, may seem not to be our meat.

Still, Catholicism flourishes only when these two dimensions of faith engage one another in a holy tension. Popular devotion, left to itself, can lose touch both with the Church's global community and with its ancient tradition. When set adrift, devotions tend to become fads, or worse, cults, isolating their adherents from the rest of the

human family in their own time and across the ages. Theological reflection, when cut off from the freshness, unpredictability and passion of popular devotion, tends toward an abstract and rigid sterility. Perhaps, then, Jesuits are called to participate in the constant renewal of Church that stems from a union of the two, namely theological reflection that takes popular devotional life as a primary source of vitality and insight into God's presence in the world.

These remarks will draw on personal observation and on the study of technological style in the United States to explore three aspects of devotional life in the contemporary American Church. First, popular devotion, in any culture, grows out of and depends upon a community of shared symbolic meaning. Second, contemporary American Catholics share in a national and Western crisis that directly affects our experience of community as well as our capacity for shared symbolic discourse. Third, several current phenomena, namely television preachers, cults and popular video entertainments, appear to be filling for some the need for devotional life but in ways that may contradict the core experience of Catholic tradition. I do not propose to "solve" the problems here but rather to shed some light on these origins and the present situation.

### **Popular devotion and communities of symbolic meaning**

Devotions depend on symbols that are publicly shared within a culture. Symbols such as the Sacred Heart, the Infant of Prague, Our Lady of Lourdes, create frames of reference in which people can relate their ordinary lives to God, where daily life—success and failure, birth and death, violence and tranquility—has meaningful place. They are "popular" because they are local, rooted deeply in the fabric of people's history. Like many good wines, often they do not travel easily in space or in time. In contrast to sacramental worship, with its commitment to the universal Church, devotions call to us from the depths of our unique traditions. They remind us that while we are one human family, the People of God, we are also



beautiful in our diversity. Catholicism has always provided a home for both experiences. It is not surprising, nor is it theologically unsound, that Mary appears in the cultural clothing of many lands, nor that many saints reside in particular home towns or make themselves known in particular historical times. "God," so this Catholic tradition seems to say, "loves the flesh and blood of our local existence." Jesus, the Galilean, emerges as the universal Christ precisely from his fleshly embrace of a historically unique starting point. Seen from this perspective, local popular devotions participate in the core tension of Christianity: Christ, human and divine, culture-bound and Lord of all. Our centuries-long experience wherein the Church responds to and evaluates popular devotions, sometimes approving them and sometimes not—one thinks of the responses to the "appearances" at Guadalupe and at Necedah, Wisconsin, as contrasting examples—continually renews the mystery of the Incarnation.

Popular devotions require, as a necessary precondition, the existence of a local culture which I shall call a "community of shared symbolic meaning." Before any saint or any vision of Jesus or Mary can spring forth as a focus for daily faith life, there must first exist a people who perceive reality within the same frame of reference. Human beings, as Karl Rahner reminds us, are symbolic at the core and our experience of God and of the meaning of life itself withers when reduced to fleshless abstraction.

The popularity of devotions such as that to the Sacred Heart in the nineteenth century and in the first two-thirds of this century in America depended, therefore, in part on the existence of a cultural frame of reference in which holy symbols, such as the Heart of Jesus, carried deep meaning for Catholics. In the United States we often call that common culture "ghetto Catholicism." The term can be used disparagingly, but it also has the implications of rich variety. Our parishes typically reflected specific European immigrant traditions. Thus, in the nineteen-fifties the small mill town in northern Wisconsin in which I lived supported four parishes, French, German,

Irish, and Polish, even though the presence of the Staudenmaiers in the Irish parish presaged the breakdown of those tight ethnic communities. Popular devotions "worked" because the Catholic ghetto "worked." That is to say, Catholics experienced themselves as a distinct people within the larger civil order that was the United States of America. We knew who "we" were. Our insularity provided the cultural frame of reference in which mid-century American Catholic practices, devotions, parish life, the place of priests and sisters, made sense. Of course this oversimplifies the matter considerably. Ethnic American Catholics felt powerful ambivalence about their relationship with the larger social order. We longed to prove ourselves good Americans even as we held on to our Catholic identities.

#### **A change of community and a crisis of symbol**

A host of developments, which gained significant momentum during World War II, began to revolutionize "ghetto" life, Catholic and other. This extraordinarily popular war galvanized Americans generally, and provided us with a common challenge that helped to overcome old prejudices. The pressure of national emergency called us, and not just Catholics, out of our disparate subcultural enclaves to mix on an almost equal basis in the armed services and the factories of the land. The same forces that began to break open black-white racial barriers served the same purpose with Catholics and non-Catholics. Indeed only a decade and a half later, our ethnic search for American legitimacy found its apogee in the election of an Irish-American Catholic to the presidency.

We could say, then, that American Catholic devotions began to decline as American Catholics began to settle into the mainstream of the nation's cultural life. As far as it goes, this is a valid and helpful interpretation. Taken alone, however, it overlooks two related technological developments which complicate devotional life still further. The first has to do with an extraordinary change in the way Americans experience "community" and the second with contem-

porary advertising's pervasive assault on symbolic meaning.

In the United States, as in Western Europe, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a gradual shift from a village life-style toward an urban, national, and global culture, due in great part to the combined influences of rail, air, and auto transport networks on the one hand and the telephone on the other. Village and neighborhood culture prevailed as long as the transportation of physical bodies and of messages was restricted to the speed of a few miles per hour. Most social interaction took place within walking distance of where one slept at night. Thus, whether I lived my entire life within the same neighborhood or migrated to distant places, my primary frame of reference was necessarily local. I depended for friendship, for my livelihood, and for cultural meaning, on the handful of people close by. Letters to loved ones, given the uncertain and slow transportation systems of the time, were no substitute for the daily interactions that are the stuff of ordinary life.

In the past several decades, however, our experience of community has become increasingly individualized and fragmented. Who, we might ask, belongs to "my community"? Once-local communities have been transformed into "support networks," an array of individuals with whom I communicate via telephone or transport systems. They differ most radically from village and neighborhood communities in that the members of my support network often do not know one another. They form a meaningful social entity only in their relationship to me. How is it possible for such social groupings to share a common symbolic life? My friends and colleagues not only represent many ethnic traditions and work experiences; they are religiously pluralistic as well. What forms of popular devotion can emerge from affiliations that are polyglot in the most basic sense of the term?

Historians of advertising commonly agree that World War I marked the rise to dominance of consumerist advertising. The new style earlier began and grew in part from an obsession with social



control as the nation's traditional elites reacted to the eastern and southern European immigrants who surged across our border at the century's beginning. Social psychologists, progressive-era politicians and proponents of scientific management sought to Americanize the newcomers by such "melting pot" processes as the Ford Motor Company's English language schools and by the study of human motivation to control what appeared to be chaotic cultural pluralism. At the same time, the maturation of mass production in the automotive and electrical-appliance industries demanded a revolution in the selling of goods. American citizens, it was felt, had to be taught to consume and consume again the flood of new products.

In response, advertising agencies gradually shifted from a rational style that focused on product *qualities* to emotional appeals that called attention to product *benefits*. The advertiser's task, in the new dispensation, was to forge a powerful affective bond between the consumer and the product. Semiotics, a recent theory of the process of symbol making, provides a helpful model for explaining one of the most common advertising agency procedure. Advertisers faced the task of taking a product which had an already-accepted symbolic meaning and attaching some other cultural symbol to that meaning in order to enhance its marketing appeal. Before 1920, for example, the wildly popular Ford Model T was perceived as a tool for transportation: durable, economical, and easy to repair. Its symbolic meaning worked well for Ford because the vast majority of buyers were purchasing their first car and these qualities were just what they wanted. But the saturation of this virgin car market in the next decade led advertisers to search out other American symbols that might enhance an automobile's affective appeal. What might lead to the purchase of the next car? They chose four such symbols. With a host of attractive images and a creative new rhetoric they portrayed the automobile as the embodiment of the American values of individual freedom, independent mobility, sexual prowess, and rising social status. Their advertising success created a new symbolic entity in the

nation; the car began to be seen less as a transportation tool than as what advertising specialists call an "ego-enhancer," a tool that dispensed freedom, mobility, sexuality, and status. Stop to analyze automobile ads which you have seen. These values still show up there.

An advertising historian, Roland Marchand, has identified a host of such symbolic transfers that emerged during the period. One type, of particular importance when considering popular devotions, was the application of sacred symbols to secular products. Thus the refrigerator appeared, surrounded by a nimbus of radiant light, dwarfing throngs of worshipers at its feet. Listerine ads adopted the ritual of family night prayers ("Now I lay me down to sleep"). Marchand's observation of the cumulative effect of such symbolic transference on public discourse is worth repeating:

To the extent that they attained the numinosity of "sacred symbols," the visual clichés of advertising acquired what cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes as the "peculiar power . . . to identify fact with value at the most fundamental level." In so doing, they pushed forward the process . . . of appropriating traditional symbols for modern ends.<sup>1</sup>

Today, after seven decades of the process, we find ourselves living in a society whose capacity for symbolic meaning has become jaded.

The cultural impact was reciprocal. Products gained temporary enhancement, but traditional symbols were "trivialized." And the process has continued, so that now, in our own time, *it seems inconceivable that traditional and sacred symbols can be further impoverished.* (Emphasis added.)<sup>2</sup>

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1 Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

2 Ibid.



This sketch necessarily oversimplifies these patterns. Much more could be said about the complex interrelationships between the technological, social, political, and business factors involved. Still, even this brief overview raised troubling issues. How might the American Church retrieve the basis for sacred symbols in a culture whose technological infrastructure fragments community even as its best-funded form of public discourse, advertising, demeans the symbols themselves?

### **Recent substitutes: cults and TV entertainments**

Given the cumulative effect of these several technologically-based developments, it should come as no surprise that, for these reasons among others, American Catholics have lost much of their taste for the old popular devotions. Where, then, have some American Catholics turned to find emotionally nourishing symbols? A number of popular practices, from widely divergent ideological perspectives, appear to be responding to our malnourished symbolic condition. Let us very briefly here note the role of cults and TV evangelists on the one hand, and soap operas and, for young Americans, music videos on the other.

Cults such as the Moonies or, more tragically, James Jones' fatal Jonestown movement, share central characteristics with television preaching. But forms of prayer life offer the security of a symbolic ghetto at a very high price: namely, surrendering adult judgment and creative interaction with nonmembers. Jonestown's fatal flaw was its jungle isolation. Cult members lacked the balancing perspective of outsiders who, if taken seriously and listened to reverently, might have warned the group of its internal suicidal tendencies. Television evangelists, though much less extreme in their articulation and necessarily less effective in enforcement, often call adherents to cultic uniformity by savage attacks on outsiders who do not share the group's beliefs. Their appeal to Catholics, unlikely as it might seem, should not be underestimated. It appears in an utterly startling re-

cent statistic which indicates that Catholics make up almost forty percent of the audiences for the television church.

The hunger for meaningful symbols may well help to explain the enormous popularity of two of the most popular current offspring of twentieth-century advertising techniques, television soap operas and music videos. Young Americans are mesmerized by the always compelling, often savage, high-pressure symbolic rituals of the videos. The soap operas' formulaic dramatizations of "ordinary life," routinely punctuated by episodes of sexual turmoil or violent conflict, attract an audience from across the age spectrum.

These trends, fundamentalist faith and intensely secular drama, indicate the existence of a serious crisis of community and symbol for the nation as a whole. It is also a crisis for the Church in particular as we become part of mainstream America. Insofar as it is cut off from ideological diversity and ancient tradition, cultic community tends toward fanaticism. The marketing of high-intensity televised symbols, for its part, erodes viewer capacity to find meaning in the ordinary fare of nontelevised life. Neither form, in its present state, offers much hope for a renewal of Catholic faith life. What religious symbols are presented, what symbols can be presented, with such an intensity?

### Possibilities

It seems to me that we seek forms of communal life which are characteristically Catholic, forms that foster local, daily and physically-interactive symbolic life while remaining open to the holy pluralism of the diverse cultural perspectives found in the universal Church community. At present there are several hopeful trends in that direction. In some American parishes, revitalized liturgical worship, the marvelous restoration of the catechumenate through the Rite of Catholic Initiation for Adults and a host of related adult renewal groups have taken shape. Where they flourish, these developments provide a model for the creation of local communities of symbolic

meaning that might foster a new generation of popular devotional life.

On the international level the forces set in motion by the Second Vatican Council give promise of the necessary balance of a global perspective. As Karl Rahner has suggested, the Council marked the beginning of a new epoch in Catholic experience, a movement from a monolingual and European church to a multilingual and global church. The transition proves difficult, to be sure. How will the universal Church learn to translate the unique perspectives that come to Rome from Africa, from Asia and from other non-Western cultures? For the American Church, on the other hand, the primary challenge lies in finding new forms of community life that provide the seed bed from which symbolically rich popular devotions can spring. How, we might ask, can we foster the delicate new beginnings of Western and American devotional life that now flourish in a few parishes around the nation? How build communities of meaning that do not dissolve into fleshless abstractions or harden into cultic rigidity?

### Jesuit contributions

Two of our own traditions may help Jesuits to participate in the struggle. Our centuries-long commitment to *eloquentia perfecta*, the ability to communicate effectively, has created a Jesuit heritage of theater and music that continually drew from and contributed to popular media. In keeping with that tradition we might pay serious attention to current media, soap operas and music videos as well as cults and TV evangelism, as a starting point for theological reflection on popular devotional forms.

Such a starting point would find its necessary complement in another Jesuit tradition, that *discreta caritas*, or discerning love by which we are called to read continually the signs of the times. It is insufficient to turn uncritically to currently popular electronic media forms without the critical labor of interpreting their ideological bias-



es. What do these popular forms tell us about our culture? In what sense do they provide the flesh and passion that popular devotions require and in what sense do they prohibit that very thing? These secular forms cannot be ignored, for they shape the affective experience of believers and nonbelievers alike. Nor can they be embraced uncritically for, as this essay suggests, they embody values directly antithetical to the essential character of popular devotion.

In short, we face the same question that has proven the source of renewal in every previous era of faith life: How to integrate the passion and turbulence of culture-specific affective life into the faith life of the universal Church. Jesuits, finally, might find resources to respond to this challenge in our present search for meaningful and affectively vital local communities. As the recent issue of *Studies* on changing community life and William O'Malley's fiery challenge in the *National Jesuit News* suggest,<sup>3</sup> the success of our renewal, if not of our survival as a religious order, may well depend on the depth and quality of our communal life. Our problem can become a resource for the larger apostolic challenge of popular devotion if we permit ourselves to be captured by its urgency. The Society's "problem" reflects in microcosm a pressing social issue for the Church and for Americans generally. Paradoxically, the more we tend to our own ways of living together, from prayer to TV, from community celebration to personal participation, the better prepared we may be to reflect on and to nurture popular devotion in the United States as the century ends.

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3 John W. Padberg, S.J., "How We Live Where We Live," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 20/2 (March, 1988), and William J. O'Malley, S.J., "The Big Loneliness," *National Jesuit News* 17/6 (March, 1988).

## NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF DEVOTION TO THE HEART OF JESUS (JWP)

The United States today inevitably forms for American Jesuits part of the context within which any devotion and its symbols operate, including devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Another part of that context, if we are not to be constrained by our own local time and space, is the historical development of a devotion. The history of the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart is an example of the process of integrating culture-specific affective life into the faith life of the universal Church. The central time span in which it took place extended from the late-seventeenth through the mid-twentieth centuries.

### Early expressions

Even before that, however, the devotion as such had embryonic beginnings. Two texts from St. John's Gospel served to focus more specifically the general atmosphere of what Scripture tells about Jesus' gentle love and compassion for all humankind. The first text is John 7:37-39 in one of its readings. On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed: "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and let him drink, he who believes in me. As the scripture has said: 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"

This reading, in which the living water is said to flow from the heart of Christ, was used also by Pius XII in his encyclical *Haurietis Aquas*, on the theology of the devotion. The other text is John 19:34: "But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water." This pierced side became the source of the iconography of the pierced heart. From the time of the Councils of Orange (441 and 529 A.D.), it became an accepted notion that the Church came forth from that pierced side of Christ, born as the new Eve from the new Adam.

In the medieval period, a foreshadowing of the devotion took form



among members of some male religious orders, for example, from William of St. Thierry to St. Bonaventure to Ludolph of Saxony to John of Landsberg. But it was especially among the great women mystics that the devotion took root. The most famous of them were the three Cistercian nuns of Helfta in Germany, Gertrude and the two Mechtilds, and the Dominican, Catherine of Siena in Italy. All three were favored with visions and revelations about the heart of Jesus. Gertrude in her devotion experienced her heart being pierced by a mystical lance. She said that she was given the mission of making known the influence of the heart of Jesus and the graces of a joyous, loving surrender to that heart. Catherine, in the prayer "Create a clean heart in me," experienced the Lord removing her heart and then later giving her his own. The Carthusian, John of Landsberg or Lanspergius, systematized earlier instances of the devotion to the Heart of God into devotion to the Heart of Jesus. In his lovely book, *A Letter From Jesus Christ*, he recommended the use of an image of the Heart of Christ so that one could gaze at it frequently, " . . . focusing their minds and hearts on Jesus himself, [they] offer their genuine devotion, not to sticks and stones but to the real person, Jesus himself, whom the artist or craftsman has tried to picture."<sup>4</sup>

In the Society of Jesus, even before the formal beginning of the devotion in its modern form in the seventeenth century, there was some impetus to it. St. Peter Canisius was the first Jesuit to make it explicit in his own life. His contact with the devotion can be traced both to his friendship with the Carthusians of Cologne and to a remarkable mystical experience that took place while he was praying in St. Peter's in Rome. As he put it in a prayer:

At that moment, Oh divine redeemer, you opened to me  
your adorable heart and granted to me to look into it.

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4 John of Landsberg, *A Letter From Jesus Christ*, translated and edited by John Griffiths (New York: Crossroads), 10.

You invited me to draw from thence the waters of salvation and to drink of your sacred founts. Then bringing my lips to your sacred heart, I desired to drink from this source and you promised me, Oh Savior, to cover my poor soul with the triple garment of peace, charity and constancy.<sup>5</sup>

Another Jesuit, Gaspar Druzicki in Poland, composed, a dozen or so years before the first apparitions to Margaret Mary, one of the first manuals of devotion to the Sacred Heart and spread it widely in his own land.

With the seventeenth century itself, the center of the devotion shifted definitively to France thanks to the influence of John Eudes and Margaret Mary Alacoque. Even before the revelations to Margaret Mary, John Eudes, who was equally interested in veneration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, worked to spread devotion to the Heart of Jesus. When the visions at Paray-le-Monial did occur, they helped to put in concentrated form a devotion already widely if informally practiced.

### Central developments

Margaret Mary Alacoque, born in 1647, entered the Visitation convent at Paray-le-Monial in 1671. From 1673 to 1675 she experienced the revelations central to the modern devotion to the Sacred Heart. Three things were especially asked for in those revelations, first that she spread devotion to the Sacred Heart, secondly that she look to the inauguration of a communion and holy hour of reparation, and third, that a special feast of the Sacred Heart be instituted. These three great revelations to Margaret Mary together with the others connected with them have formed the kernel from which the modern devotion to the Sacred Heart grew and flourished in the

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5 See William Reany, *A Champion of the Church* (New York: Benziger, 1931), 42-43

Church.

Early in 1675, Claude la Colombière, a thirty-four-year-old French Jesuit, upon completion of his tertianship came to Paray-le-Monial as superior of the Jesuit community there. He soon became spiritual director of Margaret Mary. In June, 1675, she had the revelation in which Christ asked for the establishment of the feast of the Sacred Heart and directed her to seek Colombière's assistance in so doing. On June 21, 1675, Margaret Mary and Claude celebrated privately the first feast of the Sacred Heart. After a year and a half at Paray-le-Monial, Claude was sent to England as preacher to the Duchess of York where he began to further the devotion. Later imprisoned in a wave of anti-Catholicism and fallen quite ill, he was banished and sent back to France in 1679. He returned to Paray in 1681 in a very weakened condition and died there the next year.

As a cloistered nun, Margaret Mary could only attempt to inculcate the devotion among the Visitation nuns, who at first were quite skeptical of it but later, in a change of heart, themselves adopted and furthered its spread. In 1687, twelve years after the revelation that asked that a feast of the Sacred Heart be established, the nuns of the Visitation petitioned Rome for the public establishment of the feast. At the time, the petition was not accepted. On July 2, 1688, Margaret Mary had the vision in which the Visitation nuns are to make known the devotion; Francis de Sales, one of the founders of the order of the Visitation, speaks of drawing "the waters of salvation" from Christ's heart; and Claude la Colombière is characterized as "faithful servant" of Jesus and the members of the Society of Jesus are explicitly entrusted with carrying forward the devotion. Several more times in the years to come the Visitandines asked for the institution of the feast but without success.

In the years to follow, other Jesuits took up the charge given to Claude la Colombière. Two were especially important. Jean Croiset (1656-1738) followed Claude as the spiritual director to Margaret Mary. He published the first authoritative book by a Jesuit on devo-



tion to the Heart of Christ. To be frank, Croiset's work met with strong opposition at the time. Superiors removed him from his teaching post at Lyons, partly so that he could not influence younger Jesuits, and his book was for a time placed on the Index of Forbidden Books. The other Jesuit was Joseph Gallifet (1663-1749). He built chapels in honor of the Sacred Heart, established some seven hundred confraternities of the Sacred Heart and wrote *The Devotion to The Sacred Heart of God and Our Lord Jesus Christ*. In his writings he put together a great deal of material from the life of Margaret Mary and from the notes of Claude la Colombière and compiled a list of the various groups, countries, dioceses, religious orders of men and women and organizations which were practicing devotion to the Sacred Heart. He had wide influence because he was French Assistant to the General of the Jesuits, lived in Rome and had access to the Holy See.

### Popes and Jesuits

By the late 1750s a series of requests came to Rome for the establishment of the feast of the Sacred Heart. They differed from earlier petitions in that the theology behind the request was more carefully elaborated than in the petitions which had been denied. In 1765 the Holy See gave to the bishops of Poland, to the order of the Visitation and to a confraternity of the Sacred Heart in Rome permission to celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Finally, almost a hundred years later, Pius IX in 1856 extended the feast to the whole Church.

Following upon the action of Pius IX, later Popes encouraged the devotion by a continuing series of encyclicals. In 1899 Leo XIII, in the encyclical *Annum Sacrum*, consecrated the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and ordered that this act of consecration be repeated in all churches. In 1906, the following pope, Pius X, made this an annual consecration. In 1955, Pius XI, in establishing the feast of Christ the King, attached the annual consecration to the

Sacred Heart to this feast. In 1928 the same pope, with his encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor* on reparation to the Sacred Heart, prescribed a new set of texts for the Mass of the Sacred Heart. Pius XI once described this devotion as the "summary of religion" which would lead us to an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ. Finally, in 1956, in commemoration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the extension of the feast to the entire Church, Pius XII published the great doctrinal encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Haurietis Aquas*. It was this encyclical which attempted to show the systematic theological foundation of the devotion of the Sacred Heart in Scripture and in the tradition of the Church.

Very importantly for popular piety throughout the Church, in the middle nineteenth century two French Jesuits, François Gautrelet in 1844 and Henri Ramière in 1861 established and popularized the Apostleship of Prayer. Through their zeal and through the uniting of a directly apostolic component to the devotion to the Sacred Heart, it spread widely among a great variety of religious communities, families, Catholic groups and even nations, especially in the form of the offering of all one's activities and the consecration of individuals and groups to the Sacred Heart. From the middle of the nineteenth century and up to a quarter-century ago the devotion entered so deeply into Church life that it became almost the principal hallmark of devotional Catholicism.

In the Society of Jesus itself from immediately after the French Revolution on, the devotion to the Sacred Heart grew to be the most popular in the entire Society and Jesuits were its main propagators. Jesuit churches, chapels, houses, schools, organizations, journals, prayer books, pamphlets everywhere in the world bore the name Sacred Heart. The Apostleship of Prayer and the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* in every Western language and in many other tongues too became its main ways of spreading the devotion. In the liturgical and community celebrations in Jesuit houses hardly any feast day save those of Easter and Christmas could rival it in splendor. The Father



General of the Society regularly commended the devotion to its members. Peter Beckx (General 1853-1887), for instance, asked that all Jesuit provinces consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart as he himself did for the universal Society. The twenty-third General Congregation of the Society in 1883 officially "accepted the altogether happy responsibility (*munus suavissimum*) which our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted to it, to practice, cherish and promote this devotion to his divine heart."<sup>6</sup> Subsequent General Congregations also explicitly produced decrees concerning devotion to the Heart of Christ.<sup>7</sup> The thirty first Congregation in 1965-66 published its own decree on the devotion, recalling the work of the earlier congregations and urging all members of the Society to spread it. But that congregation also recognized, quite frankly, that the devotion at least in some places was less appealing than it had previously been. It asked that experts in the matter search out the ways of presenting it that were better suited to various regions and contemporary persons.<sup>8</sup>

Vatican Council II in all its documents made no explicit mention of the Sacred Heart nor of the devotion. But even during the Council Pope Paul VI urged the heads of religious congregations to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart and the present pope, John Paul II, has strongly recommended to the Church and to the Society of Jesus the rekindling of this devotion. His most recent public initiative in this regard to the Society was his visit to Paray-le-Monial at which

on this solemn occasion [I wish] to exhort every member of the Society to promote with even greater zeal this devotion which corresponds more than ever to the expectations of our day. . . . The essential elements of this devotion belong permanently to the spirituality of the Church through-

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6 GC 23, D. 46, n.1

7 GC 26, D. 21; GC 28, D. 20; GC 30, D. 32.

8 GC 31, D. 15 in *Documents of the Thirty-first and Thirty-second General Congregations*, edited by John W. Padberg, (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 146-147.

out its history. . . . The desire to 'know the Lord intimately' and to 'speak heart to heart with him' is, thanks to the Spiritual Exercises, characteristic of the Ignatian spiritual and apostolic dynamic, totally at the service of the Love of the Heart of God.

Pope John Paul then echoed the concerns of the thirty-first General Congregation in asking that the Society "take care to find the most suitable means of presenting and practicing [the devotion] so that contemporary man, with his own particular mentality and sensitivity, may discover there the true answer to his questions and expectations."<sup>9</sup>

### Problems and opportunities

What those "most suitable means" might be is not all clear. A truly long-lasting devotion which reaches into the depths of a person and of an age and which truly responds to religious needs and desires, both individual and social, is the product of a complex evolution.

None of the centuries-long dedication, individual and corporate, to the spread of this devotion would have succeeded by itself. The particular devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the explicit symbol in which it was expressed, succeeded because it responded to the process of integrating culture-specific affective life into the faith life of the universal Church. The revelations to Margaret Mary Alacoque, the sense they made and the appeal they had to others who learned of them, the furthering of what was requested in them, all responded to the affective devotional life, the personal emotional needs and desires, the intellectual understandings of the men and women of the time, and all found a fit in the cultures of succeeding ages. This devotion in its classic form began with the religious society of seven-

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9 Letter of Pope John Paul II to Very Reverend Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Paray-le-Monial, France, October 5, 1986.

teenth-century France. It would have stayed there and, at best, would have been no more than a local piety if it had not been integrable into the operative faith life of the universal Church. From every evidence, it was thus integrated and with a success that only increased as the decades advanced. Without knowing the terminology, the followers of this devotion, as of any devotion, fashioned metaphors of faith, symbols which responded to both the faith experiences of men and women of those times and to biblical tradition.

Then, why and how did a devotion so pervasive in the Church up until a quarter-century ago, including the Church in the United States, fall so quickly into desuetude in many parts of the world, including the United States? A lengthy and complex treatise including elements of theology, liturgy, psychology and sociology would be necessary to give a complete answer, one far too ambitious and lengthy for an issue of *Studies* such as this. But that answer would surely include the observations earlier in this issue on the special external circumstances of devotional life in the Church in the United States. It would also include circumstances internal to the practice of the devotion itself, and on some of those circumstances a few brief remarks may be in order. First, in many instances those who practiced the devotion tended to look backwards. They were concerned simply with the Christ who had suffered and died, whose heart had been pierced with a lance. The sad, downcast countenances on so many Sacred Heart statues and the passive features of so many quite un-masculine pictures often left the practice of the devotion in a wash of sentimentalism. The predominant affective tone often was one simply of static pity on the part of the viewer and, as one observer remarked, of the "reproachful lover" on the part of the image, whether statue or picture. Secondly, too often many of the specific practices whereby the devotion expressed itself became mechanical. "Consecration to the Sacred Heart," for example, became the recitation of a formula (often cast in a baroque ecclesiastical language of forced sentimentality). Or the "nine first Fridays" became a kind of gim-



mick: simply receive Communion on the first Fridays of nine consecutive months and salvation was assured. Of course that is an exaggeration, but the exaggeration became an unreflected-upon attitude. What was originally an imaginative and effective way to encourage frequent reception of the Eucharist at a time when it was not at all common eventually ended up being regarded as a kind of insurance policy. Thirdly, in spite of regularly and sternly repeated injunctions, the heart of Christ was often separated in the devotion from the person of Christ. The heart has long been a symbol of love, and what better one could be found to express the love of Christ for all men and women? But one's love is directed to a person, not to a separated organ of the body. Yet often it was only the heart which was displayed or spoken of as an object of love. True, none of these circumstances are necessarily involved with the devotion, but they existed and they were widespread.

More generally since Vatican II, many have experienced difficulties in trying to explain the devotion in terms of theology as it has developed under the influence of the Council. Justified or not, this situation could easily lead to an indifference to the devotion. A positive development which had unforeseen negative consequences not only for this devotion but for many others was the renewal of worship whereby congregational and personal participation in the Eucharistic liturgy, the Mass, was emphatically put at the center of the prayer life of the Church. The reform of the missal, the expansion of the readings from Scripture, reception of the Eucharistic under both species of bread and wine and, overwhelmingly important, the use of the vernacular language in the liturgy and the repositioning of the altar, all of these made possible a breadth of personal participation at church that previously had been available only in popular devotions. Small wonder, then (but great misfortune, too), that such devotions began to wither. So much energy and imagination had to be expended on implementing the changes in the liturgy (and still we need more of the same) that little of either was left to imagine and plan



how traditional devotions might themselves best become a vital part of a Church undergoing more change in twenty years than it had in at least the previous two hundred.

Two central activities had to be undertaken to integrate “traditional devotions” into a renewed Church, and often they were lacking. The first was really to take the word “traditional” seriously and in its full meaning and to ask: What central desire was fulfilled and what central truth was expressed by a particular devotion? The second was imaginatively to envision how best in contemporary times to fulfill that desire and express that truth. Devotion to the Sacred Heart most basically responded to the desire that all men and women, all human beings, have to be known, understood, accepted, loved, in a life that is meaningful. All humankind has a desire to make sense out of things and, especially, sense out of life. This devotion expressed in symbol the truth that not only does God so respond to us, but that the response comes in the person of a God who in Jesus Christ shares our humanity and, as one of us, knows, understands, accepts and loves us. The devotion was meant to help us “know the Lord intimately” and “to speak heart to heart with him.”

How best the fulfillment of that desire and the expression of that truth might be put in symbols and devotions today is not a problem easy to solve. Symbolizing is, indeed, intrinsic to human culture, but any particular symbol and its content and the way it operates are inevitably to some extent bound by the culture in which it exists. The following section of this essay gives not apodictic solutions to that problem but personal examples of how three contemporary Jesuits made this particular symbol and devotion to the heart of Jesus part of their lives and sought to make it understandable and attractive to their worlds. By no means is it an original or a complete treatise on devotion to the Sacred Heart in the lives of a former general of the Society of Jesus, a Jesuit natural scientist and research scholar and a Jesuit systematic theologian. Rather it simply presents material from their lives and their works to stimulate our own minds and our im-

aginations on symbol and devotion in general and, in this instance, on the particular symbol and devotion to the Sacred Heart.

## THE HEART OF CHRIST AND THE CONTEMPORARY JESUIT (JMH)

### Pedro Arrupe as witness to the devotion

Devotion to the Heart of Christ has significantly influenced the spirituality of Pedro Arrupe. He saw the devotion in decline, maintained a limited silence on the theme in order not to aggravate exaggerated reactions, but testified in interviews and through homilies and writings, particularly in "Rooted and Grounded in Love," to the great importance of the devotion in his life and potentially in the life of every Jesuit. His contribution to understanding it can be structured into three brief sections: a few observations on his own spirituality drawn from his own life experiences, remarks on devotion to the Heart of Christ in homilies, letters, and articles, and finally his comments on the devotion from "Rooted and Grounded in Love."

*His own experiences.* — Over and over again Arrupe emphasizes that for him Jesus Christ means everything.<sup>10</sup> Arrupe's relationship to God in Jesus, what he has received from Jesus, and how he has used the gifts he has received, comes first. Absolutely primary for him among those gifts is the Eucharist. At the Eucharist, he poses and solves all problems.<sup>11</sup> Arrupe relates his devotion to the Eucharist to the Heart of Christ. His parents cultivated this seed which the Society would later develop. His parents gave him the simple intui-

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10 Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *One Jesuit's Spiritual Journey*, translated by Ruth Bradley (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986), 37.

11 Ibid., 8-9.

tion that the Heart of Jesus symbolizes God's unconditional love and Arrupe's life as a Jesuit has enlarged this conviction.

Arrupe stresses the theme of confidence and he derives this confidence in part from his devotion to the Heart of Christ. As a young medical student in Lourdes, he observed miracles and the power of God intervening in history. When Spain expelled the Jesuits, Arrupe continued his studies in Belgium and every day he experienced anxiety about whether the three hundred and fifty Jesuits in the community would have enough food for the day. Somehow every day they had enough. While imprisoned in Japan for some time, not only did Arrupe learn the science of solitude, severe poverty, and inner dialogue with the guest of his heart, but he also discovered the power of Providence.<sup>12</sup> After his election as superior general, he discovered how much he needed to trust. Confidence in the power and providence of God as expressed through devotion to the Heart of Christ does not result in inaction; Arrupe believes the Jesuit does all that he can but, in the end, counts upon God.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout his travels, Arrupe understands how the poor have taught the Society and himself so much. In the poor, Jesuits recognize the presence of Christ. From the poor, Arrupe has learned an obvious lesson: to enter into the gate of the simple love of the Heart of Jesus. Drawing on this power, the companion of Jesus can secure citizenship in the world and can open himself to all he meets.<sup>14</sup>

*His writings.* — Anything written by Pedro Arrupe on devotion to the Heart of Christ seems to respond to Decree 15 of the thirty-first General Congregation of the Jesuits. This document had recommended that the love of Christ which finds its symbol in devotion to the Heart of Christ center a Jesuit's life; that a Jesuit proclaim the

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12 Ibid., 21.

13 Ibid., 83.

14 Ibid., 40-42.



unfathomable riches of Christ; that he foster the primacy of love in Christian life.<sup>15</sup> Arrupe, in response to that congregation, has sought to preserve such characteristics of the devotion and to set aside unnecessary accretions.

In a letter on April 27, 1972, addressed to the whole Society on the centenary of the consecration of the Society to the Sacred Heart, Arrupe expressed the desire to resolve the ascetic, pastoral, and apostolic problems related to this devotion. He indicated that Christ's love, represented by his heart, molds the Ignatian apostolate to attain the standard of the Cross and kenosis or emptying of the self. Acknowledging conflicting views of the devotion, Arrupe suggested that in accord with the Spiritual Exercises an exchange of ideas on this devotion should feature broad understanding, a complete objectivity which considers the positive values and sets aside exaggerated reactions, and an utter respect for the legitimate freedom of others in allowing the Spirit to lead them. He explained that "reparation" proceeds from authentic communitarian demands of the mystical body of Christ, that the Apostleship of Prayer can reanimate the priestly perspective of Christian life, and that Providence had supplied this effective apostolic instrument to the whole Society.<sup>16</sup>

In a homily on the feast of the Sacred Heart in 1972, Arrupe preached that the spiritual experience of La Storta provides the key to interpreting the Ignatian consecration to the Heart of Christ. The Trinity welcomes Ignatius into its intimate circles as it accepts his key petition "to be placed with the Son." The mission of the Jesuit requires the special grace of intimacy with Christ in order to bring the world to him.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *In Him Alone Is Our Hope: Texts on the Heart of Christ, 1965-1983*, edited by Jerome Aixala, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1984), 3-4.

16 "Facing a New Situation: Difficulties and Solutions," *ibid.*, 12-17.

17 "The Spiritual Experience of La Storta and the Consecration of the Society to the Sacred Heart," *ibid.*, 23-27.

Arrupe contributed a chapter on the Heart of Christ for a book entitled *With A Human Heart*, published in 1981. He argued that the word "heart" can weaken and lose its richness because of overuse and abuse. He remarked that the devotion has been hampered because of a sentimental literary style and a time-bound imagery. Essentially, the symbol represents all the love of Christ, the God-man, sent by the Father through the Spirit who offers redemption to all and establishes a personal relationship with each. Arrupe believed that no other expression, not the titles or the metaphors, conveys the length, breadth, height, and depth of Christ's love.<sup>18</sup>

Arrupe sounded in 1973 in another of his homilies the theme of "love of neighbor" in this devotion. Faith in the pierced heart would beget illusions if it did not impel us to neighborly love. When we can love Christ in our fellow human beings, we put fear to flight, we drive out anguish and anxiety, we bolster confidence, and we experience peace.<sup>19</sup> The Heart of Christ transforms suffering into joy and pain into bliss, Arrupe proclaimed in 1975 in yet another homily on the Sacred Heart. The world clamors for joy and he defines joy as possessing the faith, being an instrument in God's hands, and being created for an eternity of companionship with God. Jesus tasted joy because he knew the Father's love.<sup>20</sup> Devotion to the Heart of Christ increases joy in the Jesuit.

In his writings and preaching on this subject, Arrupe understood that the Society of Jesus could enliven this devotion through effective presentation. In his mind this required an attitude of humility, an understanding of the values and attitudes of modern men and women, dialogue with various disciplines, patience in working for a fruitful adaptation, collaboration, and avoiding rigidity. Arrupe believed that

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18 "The Heart of Christ, Centre of the Christian Mystery and Key of the Universe," *ibid.*, 68-71.

19 "A Response of Faith and Love," *ibid.*, 123-124.

20 "A Feast of Sorrow and Joy," *ibid.*, 123-131.

Jesuits first had to understand the devotion as well as the present situation of the world and then they could explore the most effective methods for communicating and expressing it.<sup>21</sup>

*“Rooted and grounded in love”* – In this final major document prior to his stroke in 1981, Arrupe spoke again of this devotion. The core of the supreme Ignatian experience crystallized around the metaphor that God is love, argued Arrupe. In becoming more like Christ, we permit his love to be the driving force of our apostolic activity. The love that moves the Jesuit descends from above. In the Exercises, a surrender and close following of the Lord respond to this love. In the Constitutions, reality and apostolic action respond to the love from above. Arrupe cited the example of Ignatius in putting the love from above into action. Ignatius mobilized resources to aid the famine-stricken of Rome in 1538. Ignatius reached out to oppressed and exploited groups, Jews, beggars, courtesans, young women in danger.

The plight of our world, as Arrupe pointed out, offends our sensibilities and sets our zeal to work as Ignatius’ world did to him. Arrupe insisted that love energizes our apostolic work because it synthesizes all our relationships: love for Christ, love for our brothers, love for the Father, love for the people we serve. Love also resolves dichotomies: tension between faith and justice, one’s own and one’s neighbor’s perfection, prayer and apostolic work, the vows, discernment and obedience.

Then Arrupe in the final section of this last document moved explicitly to devotion to the Sacred Heart as the symbolic summing up of the Ignatian spirit. He admitted that it had been a profound affective source for his interior life. He claimed that the challenges and opportunities that the world presents can only be met with the

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21 “What Can We Do to Present the Devotion to the Sacred Heart in the Climate of Today?” *ibid.*, 135-139.



power of the love of the Heart of Christ. Not wishing to impose this devotion on any Jesuit, Arrupe did implore, "Ponder what this image presents to your mind." The power latent in this devotion must be discovered personally by each Jesuit. Arrupe called it an "extraordinary grace that God offers us." He believed that the Society needed an act of ecclessial humility to embrace this devotion. He suggested that few proofs of the spiritual renewal of the Society would convince him as much as a return to a vigorous devotion to the Heart of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

### **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and the heart of the world**

How does the devotion to the Heart of Christ fare in the mind and heart of a Jesuit who spent a career in scientific study, university teaching, paleontological field research and writing?

Devotion to the Heart of Christ was rooted in the spirituality of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and contributed a foundational element to his mysticism. He had a passionate love of the world. The world provided his pathway to God, the arena in which to relate to others, and the focus of his contemplative stance towards the future. Teilhard loved the "within" and the "not yet" of the world, and this vision enabled him to synthesize all things in Christ. In Teilhard's search for the indestructible, he discovered that the way to God passes through matter. The material significantly influenced his devotion to the Heart of Christ.

One writer claims that the logic of Teilhard's biography must be seen in the light of the piety of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> A 1917 photograph of Teilhard with his family shows them assembled beneath a painting of the Sacred Heart which dominated their home. The devotion, which he received from his mother, underwent trans-

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22 Arrupe, *One Jesuit's Spiritual Journey*, 110, 114-118, 125, 155-156, 158-159.

23 Philip Hefner, *The Promise of Teilhard* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), 87.

formation because of Teilhard's fascination with the earth, with matter, and with the cosmos. He found the traditional devotion restrictive. He conceived reparation as too limiting and he believed that the anatomical symbol of the heart had to be understood as representing the full spiritual reality of Christ. The symbol allowed him to synthesize the above and the ahead; the vertical and the horizontal axes of evolution. Teilhard viewed the Sacred Heart, as he grew older and his mysticism burgeoned, no longer as a patch of crimson but a glowing fire, a divine solid which, lit from within, exploded with the properties of energy and fire.<sup>24</sup>

*Themes in his works.* — *The Divine Milieu*, which Teilhard described as a "little book of piety," *How I Believe*, the *Heart of Matter* and the *Future of Man* together contain the themes of a universe with a personal center and union as a process of differentiation.

Repeated references to "heart" appear in the spiritual works of Teilhard. His experience in contact with the earth led him to acknowledge a diaphany of the divine at the heart of the universe. He found Christ and Christ's heart a fire capable of penetrating and spreading everywhere.<sup>25</sup>

The heart of God is boundless with mansions but there is only one place at any given moment. Teilhard exhorts his readers to go to God's heart within the divine milieu:

To have access to the divine milieu is to have found the one thing needful—Him who burns by setting fire to everything we would love badly or not enough; Him who calms by eclipsing with his blaze everything that we would love too much; Him who consoles by gathering up everything that has been snatched from our love or has never been

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24 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., *The Heart of Matter*, translated by René Hague (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), 42-44. Hereafter, HM.

25 Teilhard, *The Divine Milieu*, translated by Bernard Wall (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 14n. Hereafter, DM.

given to it.<sup>26</sup>

In another prayer, Teilhard writes, "The arms and the heart which you open to me are nothing less than all the united powers of the world."<sup>27</sup>

When Teilhard speaks of grace, he expresses it within the context of Christ's heart. The divine seeks to penetrate our nature and in the process enlarges our natural capacities. Grace operates as the unique sap which passes from a single trunk into the branches. Like blood, it pumps into the veins from a single heart. The powerful heart and the fruitful trunk belong inevitably to Christ.<sup>28</sup>

With the repeated emphasis on "heart," it does not come as a surprise that Teilhard conceives the cosmos as having a personal center. We worship this center which functions as the universal consolidator and animator. From it, God reaches out to beautify and illuminate creation.<sup>29</sup> That center radiates enormous energy which leads the universe back to God through humanity. An overwhelming attraction draws everything to the divine center.

Teilhard argues that there exists "an insatiable desire to maintain contact with a sort of universal root or matrix of beings."<sup>30</sup> This center Teilhard refers to as the "Omega point." The Omega point has an indestructible center of love and becomes for Teilhard a super-personal focal point at the heart of matter. Teilhard makes Omega the source of his quest because it offers a place of meeting—center to center and Heart to heart—where a spark attains centricity by being "amorized," (to use one of the words he coined) or

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26 Ibid., 96-98.

27 Ibid., 105.

28 Teilhard, *The Future of Man*, translated by Norman Denny (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 304. Hereafter, FM.

29 Teilhard, *How I Believe*, translated by René Hague (London: Collins, 1969), passim. Hereafter, HB.

30 HM, 20.



charged with the power of love by that Omega.<sup>31</sup>

To move towards the Omega point, the personal center, one undergoes a process of union. This theme of union also connects to Teilhard's devotion to the Heart of Christ. Union consists in an arduous process of differentiation. Becoming the other results in being utterly ourselves.<sup>32</sup> By being intimately united to Christ we accomplish the "fulfillment of the least of our tasks."<sup>33</sup> But union with Christ presupposes that we transpose the intimate center of our existence into Him. With the duty and desire of being united to God, one can achieve union if one becomes who one is as completely as possible. Suffering and death will merely dissolve into a loving fire to "consummate our completion in union."<sup>34</sup>

At the same time as one seeks union, the universe itself moves towards unification, an eschatological consummation with a fullness of maturity which will bring the final return of Christ. Teilhard urges that we follow the road of giving all our strength and heart to coincide with the focus of universal unification.<sup>35</sup> Unification of the universe anticipates the Parousia. Teilhard claims that Christ has given the Church immeasurable powers of growth. The striving of every human cell to unite with others makes the Parousia possible. He calls Christianity the religion of the Incarnation. God unites with the world which he created in order to unify it and incorporate it in himself.<sup>36</sup> Three features of the incarnate God attract and captivate us. First, God's tangibility, the result of the coming of Christ in history; second, God's expansiveness in the cosmic order, the result

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31 Ibid., 39-41.

32 HB, 39.

33 DM, 33.

34 Ibid., 66, 70, 73.

35 HM, 10, 95.

36 FM, 22, 33.

of the resurrection; third, God's assimilative power, which integrates the whole human race into a single body.<sup>37</sup> Teilhard suggests that we have the capacity of "christianizing" matter and the earth through a process of union. In the unitive process we allow the heart of the earth to beat within us and this expresses the desire for the Parousia.<sup>38</sup>

*Themes derived from critical studies.* — Scholars have traced Teilhard's devotion to the Heart of Christ by disclosing themes such as God as the "sacred heart" and "beyond" of all, the Universal Christ, the defects of Christianity, the universe closing in, evolution, adoration, and unshakable confidence in God. Through these themes and through other aspects of his spirituality and mysticism Teilhard tried to invest this devotion with new vigor and coherence by drawing upon his insights from science, from his love of the Spiritual Exercises, and from his reflections on what it means to be human and Christian.

As Henri de Lubac points out, Teilhard reveals God as the heart and the "beyond" of all things, for in his convergent and dynamic view of the universe the heart lies beyond, and the beyond lies at the heart of all. A prayer of Teilhard expresses this dynamic convergence:

Jesus, you are the center towards which all things are moving. If it be possible, make a place for us all in the company of those elect and holy ones whom your loving care has liberated.<sup>39</sup>

In another prayer, Teilhard contemplates the heart of Christ as a fire that penetrates all and spreads through all. "Fire" and "energy" are important dimensions associated with the devotion. Teilhard

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37 HM, 89.

38 DM, 137.

39 Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, translated by René Hague (New York: Desclée, 1967), 33, 117.

prays, "As a fire I desire you." Also, "Pray that I may never allow myself to desire anything but the fire."<sup>40</sup>

Teilhard held that the Sacred Heart mastered his spiritual life. He dispensed with devotional features which restricted it but he acknowledged that his religious life developed "under the sign of and filled with wonder by the Heart of Jesus." The Heart of Jesus appears as a fire "bursting into the cosmic milieu to amorize it." Teilhard always carried an image of the Sacred Heart in his breviary, and an image lay on his desk at the time of his death. On one such image he inscribed: "At the center is Jesus, no longer a spot of purple, but a burning hearth, drowning all the contours in its glow." On another occasion he wrote that he thought the devotion, an object of love, should form the center of an "esoteric cult" reserved for those who wish to be real Christians.<sup>41</sup> In Teilhard's own *Contemplation for Love* he would refer to the Sacred Heart when he would exclaim "Omega, the great coherence!"

As a Christian, as a Jesuit and as a priest, Teilhard ambited to rethink within his own evolutionary system the data of revelation concerning the person of Christ. Since it is a fundamental law of the spiritual life that God adapts to the psychology of the individual soul, one can understand how Teilhard, with his need to adore the Absolute through the concrete, could reinterpret the cult of the Sacred Heart for himself. He perceived in this object a materialization of God's love. Every accidental and restrictive peculiarity vanished away. The Universal Christ constitutes a development and extension of the Heart of Jesus. The Universal Christ would vanish were it not for the historical reality of Jesus' human nature. The Universal Christ could not be the terminus of the universe unless he had previously inserted himself by way of birth into the course of history.<sup>42</sup>

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40 Ibid., 201, 225.

41 Henri de Lubac, S.J., *Teilhard de Chardin: The Man and His Meaning*, translated by René Hague (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965), 46-47.

42 Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ*



Reformulating Christian truths in contemporary thought patterns was the aim of Teilhard's apologetics. The mutuality of God and the world, found in Jesus, anchored his spirituality. The roots of his synthesis lay in his devotion to the Sacred Heart. The cosmic Christ in his early essays he identified as the Sacred Heart in his letters to his mother.<sup>43</sup> The accent in this devotion is on love, action, and the will rather than on truth, thought, and the intellect. The Sacred Heart symbolizes the synthesis of love, matter, person, energy, and perception. Teilhard strove to spread the devotion but not in its restrictive, sentimental sense. Rather, he sought to link the Heart of Jesus with the personal heart of the cosmos.<sup>44</sup>

Interpreting the Ignatian *Contemplation for Love*, Teilhard suggests that it expresses the three great mysteries of Christianity. Creation represents the generative aspect of finding all things in the risen Christ. The Incarnation represents the unitive aspect, and the Redemption, the laborious aspect. The progressive unification of all things takes place in Christ, and union with the Heart of Christ moves everything toward the Omega. Essentially, the religious thought of Teilhard reflects the eschatological. Progress and history are building towards the Parousia and the Heart of Christ draws that movement along.<sup>45</sup>

The ascetical theology of Teilhard involves a movement of three phases. "Centration" involves becoming oneself; "decentration" requires going out of oneself and uniting with others; these two dialectical stages lead to "surcentration" which subordinates one's life to something greater, union with God centered in Christ. Such a program demands involvement in the world, a kenosis, a plunge into the

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(London: Collins, 1969), 73.

43 Robert L. Faricy, S.J., *The Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981), 10-14.

44 Ibid., 15-19.

45 Ibid., 45-47.

heart of the world which is centered in the Heart of Christ.<sup>46</sup>

As he grew older, Teilhard's retreat notes reveal a fear of death but an unshakable confidence in God. God has to be faced person to person and center to center. He believed that the cross conditions the way of progress, stands as the symbol of real progress, and marks the passage from death to Christ. He prayed, "Teach me to treat my death as a communion." The final act of creative union occurs through death.<sup>47</sup>

Teilhard's love for the person of Christ as the Sacred Heart reached its highest expression in his love for the Eucharist. Throughout his journeys, Teilhard expressed a desire to celebrate the Eucharist at an altar dedicated to the Sacred Heart. In his own efforts to rehabilitate the devotion, Teilhard emphasized a broad and not an exclusive approach. He did not stress the history of sin but the fullness of life that comes from the heart of God. Teilhard's devotion to the Heart of Christ was often expressed in poetic imagery and prayer. He wrote: "Our Lord's heart is ineffably beautiful and satisfying: it exhausts all reality." He prayed:

And then, my Lord, enfold me in the depths of thy heart.  
And there keep me, refine, purge, kindle, set on fire, raise  
aloft, according to the most pure desire of thy heart, and  
for my cleansing extinction.<sup>48</sup>

Rather than focusing on the link between Christ and the Church, Teilhard focused on Christ as the heart of the world. This same heart gives life to bodily organisms, determines the heartbeat of history, becomes the source of spiritual energy, and forms the center of existence for all life.<sup>49</sup> In the heart of Jesus, the length, breadth,

46 Ibid., 83-84.

47 Ibid., 88-90.

48 Maria Gratia Martin, I.H.M., *The Spirituality of Teilhard* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1967), 97-98.

49 Henri Rondet, S.J., "Hart van Kerk en Wereld," translated by René Mol-

height, and depth of the Risen Lord of the cosmos perdures. To this heart Teilhard could abandon himself in adoration.

### Karl Rahner's theology and the heart of Christ

Most scholars agree that Rahner systematizes theologically his own religious experience.<sup>50</sup> His reflections on the Heart of Christ prove no exception to this method. As one scholar attests, Rahner has brought the devotion to theological elaboration with a "degree of scholarship and a depth of dogmatic reflection which ought to satisfy the most sophisticated."<sup>51</sup> To begin, Rahner's doctoral dissertation, "From the Side of Christ," studies the pre-history of this devotion, tracing it to the biblical symbol of the pierced side of Christ in John's Gospel.

Scholars have published their dissertations on Rahner's theology of the Sacred Heart, and they are well worth considering.<sup>52</sup> This presentation will draw upon them, of course, for what it attempts to do. There are six areas in Rahner's reflections on the Sacred Heart which can greatly assist a Jesuit attempting to ground it and propagate it today. These fall under the following headings: (1) Primary words; (2) Theology of the symbol; (3) Jesuit spirituality; (4) Priestly piety; (5) Christological observations; (6) Some theses on the devotion.

*Primary words.* — Rahner begins his theological reflection on the

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lenkempt, S.J., in *De Heraut* 97 (June, 1967), 176-177.

50 Joseph H. P. Wong, *Logos-Symbol in the Theology of Karl Rahner* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1984), 73-74.

51 Donald Gelpi, S.J., "Rahner's Theology of the Sacred Heart Devotion, *Woodstock Letters* 95 (1966), 405.

52 Besides Joseph Wong, I will rely on Annice Callahan, RSCJ, *Karl Rahner's Spirituality of The Pierced Heart* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1985) and Michael J. Walsh, *The Heart of Christ in the Writings of Karl Rahner* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1977).



Heart of Christ in what he refers to as the "outer courts of theology." He begins linguistically. His linguistic approach paves the way for a metaphysical and theological approach.<sup>53</sup> Rahner takes up a discussion of "*primary*" words and distinguishes them from *utility* words. *Utility* words name or define realities that arise in one's interaction with the world. Humankind manufactures *utility* words. On the other hand, *primary* words name realities which cannot be exhausted by definition. *Primary* words express relationships, evoke a multiplicity of subjective reactions, and reveal a dialectic between unity and multiplicity which gives them power and causes them to attract us.<sup>54</sup>

Human beings employ primary words for invocation, argues Rahner. No guarantee exists that primary words will remain primary and comprehensive forever. Consider the word "Logos," which Rahner believes began as a primary word for the author of John's gospel in which he could sum up his theology. Today, for us "Logos" holds its place as just one among many theological key-words. Rahner believes that a primary word can be found in "heart." He admits that the word has indeed been shouted from rooftops and used with bad taste, and that we may miss it, ignore it, or reject it; but the Church has accepted it and invokes it in the pierced heart of Christ. This heart reveals a love that conquers in failure, triumphs in weakness, and gives life as it dies.<sup>55</sup>

Primary words, *Urworte*, says Rahner, spring up from the heart, drop down from heaven, have a power of enchantment. Using them, doors open upon depths, and the words make present new realities. Everyone uses primary words, often without realizing it. We all repeat the action of Adam in "calling things by name." God chose

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53 Callahan, 37.

54 Walsh, 20-21.

55 Karl Rahner, S.J., *Mission and Grace*, vol. 3, translated by Cecily Hastings (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 131-134. Hereafter, MG.

“word” and not, for example, “tonal music” to reveal who God is.

In the instance which we are considering, the Church seizes upon a particular word, an image from the Passion and Holy Week, and places that word before the people throughout the year. That word is “heart.” The mystery of the Lord’s heart, torn open and poured out, presents itself not as a concept but as a word that defies definition. As a primary word, “heart” does not originate with the anatomist but with human experience. This word occurs in all languages, does not lose touch with the corporeal and tangible, expresses the meaning of the original unity and totality of a person, and captures the mystery of human existence without solving the mystery.<sup>56</sup>

This primary word, “heart,” wanders through the language of all peoples, surges up in dreams, performs like an archetype, and carries with it an immeasurable weight because of what it possesses as a word. Rahner asserts that a discussion of word itself prefaces speaking of the eternal Word becoming flesh and risking the adventure of a human heart. Focusing on the reality of the primary word stands before a discussion of the sin of the world piercing the heart of Jesus, and love flowing out in uselessness to become the heart of the world.<sup>57</sup> Primary words, as Rahner underscores, perform powerfully of themselves, can lead to theological reflection, but can also degenerate into meaninglessness if one does not use them with understanding and discernment.

*Theology of the symbol.* — From a linguistic discussion, Rahner moves to a metaphysical one. The Sacred Heart provides Rahner with the starting point for some of his most incisive reflections on the nature of the symbol and its theological implications.

Rahner directly states as a principle that “All beings are by their

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56 Karl Rahner, S.J., *Theological Investigations*, vol. 3, translated by Karl and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1967), 296-302. Hereafter TI3.

57 *Ibid.*, 329-330.

nature symbolic because they necessarily 'express' themselves in order to attain their own nature."<sup>58</sup> One reality can represent another by rendering it present. A symbol allows another "to be there." This principle establishes the incarnational, sacramental nature of all reality.

Symbols pave the way to knowledge of self, and of other beings. Without the symbol, another being cannot be known at all. The self-realization of any being creates the symbol. A symbol belongs intrinsically to what has been expressed. That expression springs from the essence of the being and constitutes its self-realization.<sup>59</sup> These philosophical observations lead Rahner to propose that no theology can be complete without a theology of the symbol. Just as each being bears within itself an intrinsic plurality without detriment to its unity and perfection, so, too, each theological treatise symbolizes a plurality of meaning. For example, the theology of the Logos is a theology of the symbol because the Word generated by the Father images and expresses the Father. The Logos represents the inward symbol which remains distinct from what is symbolized. God must first express inwardly who God is to utter an expression outwardly.<sup>60</sup>

The incarnate Word absolutely symbolizes God in the world. The Word expresses what and who God wishes to be in free grace. This divine attitude can never be reversed, argues Rahner. God does not use humanity as a masquerade. Humanity discloses the Word of God. The Son reveals symbolically that which the Father enunciates.

The Church continues the symbolic presence of the Word in the world. Sacraments make concrete and actual the symbolic reality of the Church as primary sacrament. The Church and sacraments symbolically embody the Spirit of God and the inner history of the dia-

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58 Karl Rahner, S.J., *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, translated by Kevin Smith (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 224.

59 Ibid., 228-231, 234.

60 Ibid., 235-236.



logue between God's unmerited love and human freedom. In the end, many symbols will cease to be: the institutional Church, the sacraments, historical manifestations of God. But as long as space and time condition reality, a salvific God will show forth who and what that God is in symbols, and humanity will grasp God symbolically.<sup>61</sup>

Rahner goes on to treat symbols at another level. The body symbolizes the reality of the human person. The symbol and the symbolized create a unity. Each part of the body comes from the originating source and signifies not only the part but the one whole, composed of the symbolic-generating origin and the material piece of reality. Rahner suggests that all discussion of the meaning and object of devotion to the Sacred Heart should take place within the context of a discussion of the theology of symbolic reality. The heart expresses the inner center of the person which realizes itself in bodily existence. In Christianity, reality and appearance in the flesh are forever one, unconfused and inseparable.<sup>62</sup> Having set down these bases for the symbolic use of the heart to express the complex of psychosomatic activities which make up the human personality, Rahner goes on to say that the symbol of the heart involves a two-fold movement, inward to the core of the person, and outward from the personal center to God and others.<sup>63</sup> The unity of the human person, naturally and substantially composite with the physical, bodily heart, constitutes the place of decision-making, the core of freedom, and the locus of surrender to the mystery of God.

Men and women seek key words and symbols to summarize their religion. The Sacred Heart can serve as such a symbol for religious synthesis. Rahner speaks of the necessity, not of the devotion itself, but of the use of a unifying symbol capable of epitomizing the essen-

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61 Ibid., 240-244.

62 Ibid., 247-252.

63 Walsh, 43-44.

tials of Christian life. The Heart of Christ can be such a symbol of God's free, merciful love at the center of all reality.<sup>64</sup>

The Sacred Heart provides Rahner with an example of the theology of the symbol and allows him to conclude that a symbol which enables humans to synthesize the Savior's deeds of love offers a valuable resource to believers. The Sacred Heart can be that symbol and that resource when disengaged from its time-conditioned elements.

*Jesuit spirituality.* — Rahner says that there are three distinguishing essentials of Jesuit spirituality: "indifference," the encouragement of an existential uniqueness, and love and loyalty to the Church. But, like all things human, they can together degenerate into a mere functionalism, to which the devotion to the Heart of Christ, produced from Jesuit spirituality itself, offers an "antitoxin." Rahner claims that Ignatian spirituality and devotion to the Heart of Christ form part of a Jesuit's destiny. A Jesuit deals with that destiny by dodging it, ignoring it, considering it or by mastering a proper understanding and approach to it and building it positively in one's life in a way that corresponds to one's particular vocation. If God allows this devotion to be placed within the corporate Jesuit life, then Jesuits ought to do something positive with the devotion.<sup>65</sup>

Rahner considers "indifference" to be the first essential feature of Jesuit spirituality. To be indifferent requires one to possess an alert, acute, and highly sensitive acceptance of the relativity of all things as preliminary, expendable, and needing to be passed through to attain God. Even the most sublime religious things, including one's devotion to the Heart of Christ, cannot be equated with God.

Secondly, Jesuit spirituality encourages an existential uniqueness. A Jesuit knows his vocation comes from the will of God for him

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64 Walsh, 61, and Callahan, 46.

65 MG, 179.

individually and particularly and he develops his individuality not as a wealth to be hoarded but as a treasure to be shared. This characteristic enables the Jesuit to view each situation with a sense of the here and now, with a healthy skepticism, with a vision to plan, and with a robust adaptability.<sup>66</sup> For both Ignatius and Rahner, surrendering to God fulfills such an existential uniqueness and freedom. A Jesuit's particular "Suscipe" determines the fate of all his particular talents and gifts.<sup>67</sup>

Love and loyalty to the Church, thirdly, distinguish a Jesuit's spirituality. A Jesuit serves the Church in spite of its weakness because he believes that the Church mediates Christ's presence in the world. He relates to the Church with the humility of a creature who makes an idol of neither himself nor the Church. A silent love distinguished by humility, service, lack of self-importance form the roots of a Jesuit's relationship to the Church.<sup>68</sup>

But as with all things created, these characteristics can turn bad. History records numerous examples of charismatic inspiration degenerating into a formalized caricature of the original reality and Jesuits need not expect to be exempted from this.<sup>69</sup> Rahner believes that God bequeathed this devotion to the Sacred Heart as an interior counterbalance to such a danger with Jesuit spirituality. He suggests how the devotion can complement each of the Jesuit essentials. He thinks that the devotion can induce humility which acts as an antidote to all self-destructive excesses.<sup>70</sup>

"Indifference" has much in common with death; one dies to the world. Indifference can be life-bearing when love transports it.

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66 Ibid., 184.

67 Callahan, 91.

68 MG, 186-187.

69 Gelpi, 414.

70 MG, 189.



Unfortunately it can also involve a withering of heart into a stale and sterile death. Indifference should not kill the heart, but only mortify the secret self-seeking which rejects the infinite freedom of God. The pierced heart, the heart poured out, does not shrink from any fate that might befall it. It does not hesitate to commit all its love even though the love receives no answer. Someone with an adoring devotion to love can save his indifference from becoming a deadly poison.<sup>71</sup>

The existential uniqueness of a Jesuit stands in danger of becoming a deadly loneliness, hardness, and cynicism. The sometimes solitary nature of Jesuit life could easily congeal into frigidity. When steeped in humility through a heart that loves, a Jesuit can ward off the onslaught of hardness. Rahner maintains that any love for a concrete being has an incarnational character, a hidden kind of faith in the incarnation, and hence a form of devotion to the Heart of Christ. Through the power of faith, one can accept God's love bestowed through the pierced Heart of Christ.<sup>72</sup>

A Jesuit demonstrates a radical loyalty to the Church only through a heart serving in love. A Jesuit learns from the Heart of the Lord to practice humble and self-forgetting love, to be tender-hearted, and to be a person who forgets himself in order to serve others. A Jesuit lives a healthy Ignatian spirituality when he loves the Heart of Christ and loves in union with it. Otherwise, Rahner contends, the sublime in the Ignatian charism deals death. The Church, bursting with a spirit of prodigal love, springs from the Heart of Christ. Jesuits long to see the Church serve as her Lord did, ready to take risks with love. When it does not do so, when its human weaknesses are all too evident, cynicism easily follows. Or a love of the Church, unless truly recognizing its human characteristics, can become a fanaticism which denies the sin that does exist in the Church.

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71 Ibid., 191-193.

72 Ibid., 194-197.

On the other side, Ignatian spirituality incites a full flowering of devotion to the Heart of Christ. Rightly understood, this devotion provides the context and source for authentic Jesuit spirituality.<sup>73</sup> Such devotion may not always be delimited by the word "heart." To claim an explicit devotion to the Heart of Christ, maintains Rahner, means that the Spirit of love flowing from the pierced heart does indeed animate us. If Jesuits possess the grace to name the devotion explicitly, they have a responsibility to proclaim it as well as to acknowledge it as a blessing. This devotion can increase a Jesuit's love for God in Christ. It can help him attain his uniqueness through the love of the other person. It can enable him to love the Church in order to love all.<sup>74</sup>

In devotion to the Heart of Christ, Rahner finds a "providential antitoxin for the hardness and functionalism which might otherwise invade the Jesuit spirit." The broken heart of the Savior offers Rahner the symbol which lends warmth and generosity to the Ignatian form of service to the Church.<sup>75</sup>

*Priestly piety.* — Devotion to the Heart of Christ, Rahner attempts to show, can channel grace for the priesthood of tomorrow by envisioning the priest of the future.<sup>76</sup>

The modern priesthood has both its virtues and its failings. Among its less admirable characteristics Rahner points out the following: hectic activism, rationalistic aridity of heart, withering of contemplation and mysticism, lack of prayerful theology, tendency to

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73 Ibid., 198-200.

74 Ibid., 207-210.

75 Avery Dulles, S.J., "The Ignatian Experience as Reflected in the Spiritual Theology of Karl Rahner" in *Jesuit Spirit in a Time of Change*, edited by Raymond Schroth, S.J. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1968), 40.

76 The material for this section of the essay is drawn from Rahner's "The Man with a Pierced Heart" in *Servants of the Lord*, translated by Richard Strachan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 108-119.

expect remedies through institutional change. By properly understanding and entering into the devotion to the Heart of Christ, priests can counter these conditions. Perhaps only a small circle will draw upon this grace, and, to be sure, priestly piety need not express itself in this devotion, but, if God offers that particular grace to priests, Rahner hopes that they will not proudly despise nor frivolously dismiss it.

To develop this position on the devotion, Rahner sketches his vision of the priesthood in tomorrow's world. Instead of bearing witness through its institutional structures, the Church will bear witness through priests and the witness of the vigor of their experience of God. Humans with pierced hearts will respond to the call of priesthood. Through their own pierced hearts, these priests will draw strength for their mission. The growing godlessness of life, the frequent folly of love, the lack of success, and the misery of unreliability will pierce the heart of tomorrow's priest. Through that opened and sensitive heart, they will be able to lead men and women to their inmost center, to their true temple, to the fountain of life.

Future priests can contemplate their call with archetypal simplicity by gazing at the pierced Heart of Christ. By calling upon the Heart of Jesus, they evoke that unifying center, both incomprehensible and matter-of-fact, which displays itself in Jesus of Nazareth. Thus Rahner argues that the really modern Christian anticipates the future by keeping safe the past. People who find images of tomorrow in shadows of yesterday can speak with authority about today.

Anyone with the courage to let grace in, to know desolation of heart, to act with fidelity, to follow one's conscience without reward, to love a person farthest away as one's neighbor, and to discover wretchedness begins to understand the meaning of devotion to the Heart of Christ, according to Rahner. In calling upon the Lord with one's own heart, a priest perceives the grace of this devotion being offered, accepts it, lets it grow, does not inflate it with pious talk, or display it while disregarding creaturely pluralism. A priest in posses-



sion of this devotion will have found a resource to exercise the priesthood of the future.

*Christological observations.* — The Heart of Christ implies asking who and what one thinks Christ is. Rahner's Christological synthesis supports the symbol and devotion to the Heart of Christ. A Monophysite bias, at least implicitly denying the reality of Christ's human nature, has, according to Rahner, permeated most Christologies, particularly those from above. The Council of Chalcedon's "fully human and fully divine" has to be the starting point for judging the adequacy of any Christology. Traditionally, theologians have paid too little serious attention to Jesus' humanity. In order for the humanity of Jesus to have real meaning, Rahner contends that the theologian must understand theological anthropology before he or she can predicate the humanity of the Word of God. Rahner defines humanity as a *potentia obedientialis*, the capability of being assumed by God in a possible incarnation. Humanity, the undefinable, fulfills its essence to the degree in which it realizes its potentiality by surrendering to the mystery of God. Jesus did so completely. By starting with a search for what humanity means, Rahner arrives at the full actualization of the human in Christ.<sup>77</sup>

When God's self-communication and free creaturely acceptance were completely joined, the hypostatic union took place. The bestowal of grace and the direct vision of God affect the whole human race because of that union. That Jesus possesses a full humanity allows him to function in "intercommunicative" solidarity. Through Christ, God comes in revelation and grace. Through Christ, humanity approaches God in knowledge and love.<sup>78</sup>

In his Christological synthesis, Rahner can base the use of the symbol of the Heart of Christ. Christ's intercommunication grounds

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77 Walsh, 64-65, 69-73.

78 Ibid., 74, 93-96.

the meaning for the use of this symbol. Rahner argues the possibility of real worship here because the humanity of Christ perdures in eternity through the hypostatic union. Only the perdurance of Jesus' humanity permits the symbol to function at all. By virtue of Jesus' intercommunicative role, each person searches for the meaning of existence by seeking the heart and expressing his or her discovery in attitudes toward others and the world. Christ's intercommunication grounds the meaning for the use of this symbol. The Heart of Christ atones for sins, mediates all grace, gives access to the vision of God and conveys the paradigm of a Christian's relationship to the world. The world does not disappear in the Redeemer's act. The Heart of Christ symbolizes the permanence of the incarnational structure of grace for the Christian living in the world. This symbol presents in a concrete way what Rahner's transcendental theology presents in an abstract way.<sup>79</sup>

Many express disaffection for this devotion, as Rahner recognizes, because of the sentimentality of the symbol's depictions or the cloying effusiveness of certain Sacred Heart prayers. Several elements from Rahner's Christology, if taken seriously and successfully integrated into the devotion, could enhance it by showing how it responds to the real human condition. First, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus identifies true love of neighbor as true love of God. The human person risks when loving others, and hopes that loving God will not equally be a risk that leads to disappointment. Christ realizes the unity of this love, and the symbol of his heart epitomizes it. Second, at the end of life we all face the reality of death. Utterly unique to us as humans is the courageous and obedient acceptance of death as our own free act. Since the biblical piercing of Christ's heart established the symbol, the death of each Christian can be incorporated into the Heart of Christ. Modern men and women seek hope for the future within history. By creating a better world, we humans hope to

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79 Ibid., 98-108.

overcome the discrepancy between what we experience ourselves to be and what we hope to become. Rahner says that the revelation of Jesus prevents that search from committing itself to any human ideology. The symbol of the Heart of Christ can represent what humanity hopes to become, even beyond itself. The Heart of Christ performs a symbolic function in Rahner's Christology from above and below. From above, the totality of Christ, symbolized in his heart, presents itself in a unity of divine and human reality and provides sense and meaning for those who search history for a Savior. From below, it symbolizes the faith experience which consists of a living relationship with the person of Jesus.<sup>80</sup>

*Some theses on the devotion.* — During his lifetime Rahner received repeated questions on this devotion. Perhaps as a response to them, he organized some reflections in thesis form. The following remarks do not assume that format but they do try to synthesize the major points of those theses.<sup>81</sup>

One must distinguish between the practice of this devotion and its description. Rahner claims that many forms of the devotion exist. The mystic has one form. The person moved by the redemptive act will choose another. One form belongs to the genuine piety of the average Christian. Someone with creative originality will possess another. No one has the right to impose a restricted form of the devotion. Church leaders need to exercise pedagogical discretion about age, sex, nationality, religious mentality, and sophistication when promoting this devotion. On the other hand, if it strikes people as obscure, extravagant, or outdated, those persons should inquire whether they humbly and reverently ponder the mystery of God in

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80 Ibid., 127-132.

81 In addition to appearing in *Heart of The Savior*, edited by Joseph Stierli, S.J., and translated by Paul Andrews, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1958), 131-143, hereafter, HS, another version of an essay on these theses appears in TI3, 333-352.



Christ who wished, to love sinners with a personal and intimate love.<sup>82</sup>

Stressing again the primal concept of heart, Rahner suggests that it represents the kernel of humanity, in which the inmost being of humanity can be grasped. The focal point of relating to others also rests in the heart. To represent the physiological heart symbolically and to stylize the symbol are both natural. A representation of the heart alone ought to be rejected because it is the person of the Lord who deserves adoration. If the Heart of Jesus means the original center of the human reality of the Son of God, then a basic religious act can be mediated through this center, through which all our movement must pass in order to arrive at God so that the pious will have a resting place and the penitent will have a refuge. One can be a Christian and not hear about the Sacred Heart, but one cannot be a Christian without, through the help of the Spirit, moving through this unifying center, the Heart of Christ.<sup>83</sup>

Because the person of the Lord claims adoration, worship forms the structure of the cult. In fact, Rahner defines the devotion as the

latreutic cult—or worship—of the Person of Christ under the aspect of his Heart in so far as this is governed by the prodigal love of God for sinful men, the love in which God gives himself to the sinner.

In addition to all the created gifts which God gives to us, He also communicates his own prodigal love itself which pours out from the personal center of Christ and invites adoration.<sup>84</sup>

A discussion of this devotion has to make some appeal to the private revelations of the seventeenth century at Paray-le-Monial. Rahner contends that these revelations signify a new and legitimate

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82 HS, 131, 134.

83 HS, 133-134; TI3, 46.

84 HS, 137-139.

expression drawn from the treasury of faith. Despite the fact that devotion to Christ's heart continues historically back to Scripture, the private revelations at Paray-le-Monial point out a particular course of action among many which might be possible. Rahner does not believe that the basic thrust of the message communicated there is directed against the Jansenism of that time but against the secularization of modern times in general. The message of Paray-le-Monial emphasizes interior life, the strengthening of faith and love without the props of an externally Christian society. The message stresses belief in a God of love in spite of the reality of divine judgment. It highlights reparation as our enduring in fellowship with Christ our own Gethsemane and Golgotha. It underscores "inwardness" as a loving trust in the power of God in a world grown cold and human-kind uniting with that power in spirit and action. Rahner recommends that the devotion arising out of Paray-le-Monial needs to be integrated into a Trinitarian context by focusing on Christ as mediator to the Father.<sup>85</sup>

The devotion often has not been rightly preached, asserts Rahner. It needs to be directed not so much *to* Christ as *with* and *in* him. One does not need the last and most modern word on spirituality to evangelize with this devotion. One does need humility and good will. A proper understanding of reparation involves a trusting, obedient, and loving acceptance of a share in the fate of the Lord. This consists in the encounter with sin in the world, the infirmities of the body, the experience of darkness, the pain of persecution, the absence of God, and the reality of death. Reparation includes an equal sharing in the accomplishment of redemptive love. Any works freely done which go beyond duty or obligation only rehearse the believing and willing heart for its allotted share in the fate of the Lord.<sup>86</sup>

In contemplating and meditating on the Passion (especially in

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85 Ibid., 142, and TI3, 340.

86 HS, 148; TI3, 341-345.

connection with the "Holy Hour" often recommended as part of the devotion) we pray to the glorified Christ, who needs no consolation. This contemplation can tend to bridge the distance between ourselves and the suffering Christ. The meaning of this time-vaulting does not imply our wish to join Christ as a fellow actor in an imagined setting. Rather it gives us a clear grasp of those historical events which made the Lord the one "who learned obedience by suffering." Rahner encourages the practice of a holy hour not for the purpose of consoling the Lord but for contemplating the sufferings of Christ as the law of our own lives. We pray in order to be able to submit obediently to the historical character of our times as Jesus submitted to being placed in time.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, Rahner makes a brief comment about the so-called Promises of the Sacred Heart to those who practice this devotion. They do not add anything that has not been promised by the Lord to the believer. They do not offer directions for acquiring power over God. Basically, they promise the closeness of a redeeming, forgiving, and loving God.<sup>88</sup>

Prior to Vatican II, Rahner and others brought their Christological insights to this devotion. Since Vatican II, he has emphasized the historicity of the Church as the proper context for interpreting the devotion. Vatican II articulated an optimism regarding universal salvation, and Rahner believes that as a grace of this devotion the Christian of the future Church will be a mystic recognizing the presence of God in the secularized world. Rahner predicts it will form the piety of radical Christians, and he believes the devotion can be enhanced by identifying with the pierced heart of Jesus at a level of compassion, not compunction. We can enhance the devotion by entering into the dispositions of the Heart of Christ and not by trying

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87 HS, 153-154.

88 TI3, 351-352.



to save it from pain.<sup>89</sup> We can enhance the devotion by improving the lot of others rather than by trying to assure our place in heaven.

Rahner's approach appeals to an individual's interiority, freedom, need for forgiveness, desire to accept life, suffering, and death in faith, and ability to identify with Jesus Christ in a response of loving surrender. The devotion expresses a need to share one's faith, a need for symbolic language, and a need for creativity in working out a spirituality in tune with the gospels and the signs of the times.

In a foreword to a collection of texts on the heart of Christ, *In Him Alone Is Our Hope*, Karl Rahner remarks:

. . . In the history of the Church or a religious order there are—"analogically" at least—experiences that, once they have taken place, assume and keep the value of a permanent norm. Without going into the history of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in the Society of Jesus, we can safely state that this Order did have, at a certain moment of its history, an experience that the Society has accepted fully. . . . Here we touch something that may be difficult to understand from the point of view of theology and history of spirituality, but worth reflecting upon: That a religious order accepted and understood an experience as an integral part of its essence, so that it may not relegate that experience to the unimportance of the past, even though that experience did not occur in association with the origins of the Order. . . . Evidently this fidelity [to the devotion to the Sacred Heart] cannot work through reactionary conservatism. Handing down this legacy demands a creative fidelity that may revitalize it. This demands re-thinking it theologically and pastorally.<sup>90</sup>

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89 Callahan, 101-115.

90 Arrupe, *In Him Alone Is Our Hope*, xi-xii.

## EPILOGUE

The following news is excerpted from S.J. News and Features, Volume 16, number 1 (January-February 1988) published for the whole Society of Jesus by the Jesuit curia in Rome:

### *Meeting at Paray-le-Monial*

All the Jesuits in Europe who so wish can participate in the day of prayer and exchange of ideas that will take place on July 2 with Father General Kolvenbach at Paray-le-Monial. The purpose of the day is to celebrate the tercentenary (July 2, 1668—July 2, 1988) of the mission entrusted to the Society to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (*munus suavisimum*) which John Paul II commemorated, emphasizing its importance, when he visited Paray-le-Monial on October 5, 1986.

The Provincial of France has already notified the Provincials of Europe, asking them to extend the invitation to the members of their Provinces. He has already delegated a committee to do the spiritual and material organization of the meeting. The Jesuits who intend to participate are asked to notify either their own Provincial or the Provincial of France. . . . You should decide as soon as possible because during the summer Paray-le-Monial is invaded by thousands of pilgrims (especially for huge meetings of the charismatics) and so it is necessary to reserve places soon.

. . . At 10:30 a.m. in the basilica of the Sacred Heart Father General will preside at a Eucharistic Liturgy open to all—Jesuits and non-Jesuits. The afternoon program, for Jesuits only, will consist in a sharing of ideas, . . . a conference by Father General, and an hour of prayer in the chapel of Blessed Claude la Colombière.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

For the last fifteen years I have been associated with the Jesuits at Jesuit Renewal Center in Milford, Ohio. I continue to direct retreats and offer spiritual direction to a number of people, both religious and lay. Recently I have directed 19th-annotation retreats with lay persons and members of religious congregations.

It is amazing to me to witness the emergence of the graces of the four weeks of the exercises in people in such different walks of life. I am referring to those who are spiritually ripe for the experience. Roger Haight's article, "Foundational Issues in Jesuit Spirituality" (19/4), and an earlier one by Edward Kinerk, "When Jesuits Pray: A Perspective on the Prayer of Apostolic Persons" (17/5), have been especially helpful to me in the exercise of this ministry. So many of the stumbling blocks to a true grasp of Ignatian spirituality are mentioned by Haight, and at the same time the basic principles of the Exercises are honored by him.

I just wanted to write my appreciation of Haight's article and express a sincere hope that there will be subsequent articles by Jesuits dealing with the potential value of his approach.

Margaret Telscher, SND de N  
Cincinnati, OH

Editor:

I am writing to express my gratitude for the issue of *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, "Downward Mobility," by Dean Brackley, S.J. The piece was compelling and challenging. I am a student at Weston School of Theology, where a professor quoted from "Downward Mobility" during a homily. I read the whole piece and was deeply moved and inspired!

Mev Puleo  
Cambridge, MA



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