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S U P P L E M E N T



“The heart of Jesus and the heart of the believer”

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FOR INTERNAL USE

THE HEART

(Continued)

Pope Francis, in the Encyclical Letter *Dilexit nos*, writes this : “In this ‘liquid’ world of ours, we need to start speaking once more about the heart and thinking about this place where every person, of every class and condition, creates a synthesis, where they encounter the radical source of their strenghts, convictions, passions and decisions” (9) It is essential not to ... ‘risk losing our center, the center of our very selves’ (id.) to understand, to believe, to love, to be alive to a greater intimacy with God great and merciful, and to a more concrete proximity and attention toward the brothers we meet on our way. Jesus is the model of life for any believer, and still more for any consecrated person.

‘This is how God loves us : this is how Jesus-Christ our Lord and creator became an undescrivable attraction for our hearts, a perfect model and an all-powerful help (...) At the sight of this marvellous spectacle, the priests of Betharram felt drawn to dedicate themselves to imitating Jesus, humble and obedient, and to working wholeheartedly to bring the same happiness to others’. (The founding text. The Founder’s manifesto).

THE HEART OF JESUS

Jesus came in order to reveal God’s Heart to us. God’s invitation addressed to Jeremy, and through him to all the ‘lost children’, was welcomed by Jesus : ‘*I shall give you shepherds after my own heart, who will pasture you wisely and discretely*’ (Jr 3,15). ‘*In the pit of my stomach how great was my agony ! Walls of my heart ! My heart is throbbing ! I cannot keep quiet*’ (Jr 4,19). ‘*That is why I yearn for him, why I must take pity on him*’ (Jr 31,20).

Heart of Jesus, in which the Father has put his kindness.

Jesus receives the help of Mary and Joseph to shape his heart. Both inculcated to their son the golden rule, present under various shapes in numerous cultures:do not make to others what you would not like them to make to you, or expressed in a positive way : make to others what you would like the others to make to you (cf. Luke . 6,31). In his family, in a progressive and concrete way, Jesus learnt the principle of reciprocity : to

respect the playmates, to be nice to every one, to help those who are in trouble, to be compassionate and meek, to know how to accept willingly the unpleasant occurrences of daily life.

Heart of Jesus, in which are found all the treasures of wisdom and science.

Jesus learnt from Mary and Joseph to watch over the impulsiveness of his heart. Nazareth is a small village where every one knows everything about every one. Those who went to town for the market, or those who came back home from their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, had many news to tell, often negative : about the criticisms against the rigorist religious class, about the complaints against the Roman domination, about cases of injustice which burdened and exhausted the poor and voiceless. For sure, Mary and Joseph took care of bringing up their son with a serious human training, teaching him not to judge hastily, helping him to trust God the Father, always merciful, slow in anger and great in forgiveness.

Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High.

Jesus learnt to keep the first place in his heart for the Father, to live always the intimacy with him. Attending *'as he usually did'* (Lc.4,16) the synagogue of Nazareth, or going to Jerusalem and entering the Temple, the dwelling-place of the Most High, Jesus let his heart be shaped by getting familiar, listening to the Torah, with the readings of the prophets and the prayer of the psalms.

Heart of Jesus, holy temple of God.

Prayer and intimacy are for Jesus strong moments: he can't do without them ; a silent prayer, or a prayer supported by reciting the psalms, which transforms him inwardly. After Jesus left Nazareth for the mission he had come for, we see true convictions, authentic attitudes and acts of love emanating from him: *'Put and end to the malice of the wicked, make the upright stand firm, you who discern hearts and minds, God the upright. God is a shield that protects me, saving the honest of heart'* (Ps 7 : 9-10) *'Help, Yahweh ! No one loyal is left, the faithful have vanished from among the children of Adam. Friend tells lies to friend, and smooth-tongued, speaks from an insincere heart'* Ps 12:1-2). *'Who shall go up to the mountain of Yahweh? Who shall take a stand in this holy place? The clean of hands and pure of heart'* (Ps 24, 3-4). *'Rejoice in Yahweh, exult all you upright, shout for joy, you honest of heart'* (Ps. 32,11). *'Yahweh is near the broken-hearted, he helps those whose spirit is crushed'* (Ps. 33, 19). *'Maintain your faithful love to those who acknowledge you, and your saving justice to the honest of heart'* (Ps.36,10). *'My heart is stirred by a noble theme, I address my poem to the king'*

(Ps.45,1). *'But you delight in sincerity of heart, and in secret you teach me wisdom... God, create in me a clean heart, renew within me a resolute spirit, do not thrust me away from your presence, do not take away from me your spirit of holiness. Give me back the joy of your salvation, sustain in me a generous spirit'* (Ps.51, 6-7. 10.12) *'Blessed those who find their strength in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage'*. (Ps.84, 5). These quotations and 57 others, taken from the psalms, have forged the heart of Jesus .

Heart of Jesus, fiery furnace of love.

After the period of training, reflection and interiorization, time has come for testimony. Jesus starts his mission by announcing the kingdom: *'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand'* (Mk.1,15 ; cf Mt 4,17). Jesus wanted *'a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of sanctity and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace'* (Preface of the feast of Christ-King). In fact, the kingdom of God is knocking at the doors of human existence and history. The good news of the kingdom annouced by Jesus certainly has the faith of Israël as a background : the prophetic tradition, the prayer of the psalms and the tradition of cult. Jesus is worried as long as he has not purified the prayer and cult from legalist incrustations. It was necessary to give life to everything once more, since for him only the spirit vivifies. While starting from tradition, Jesus feels the impulse to look at all and each one with passion and compassion . His heart stirs in front of the persons, a people without shepherd, tired and demotivated. Jesus was creating a new climate, which every one neither recognize or shares, but which the poor and sinners understand and share, because they have felt welcomed, understood, comforted.

Heart of Jesus, sanctuary of justice and love.

After calling his first disciples and seeing the crowds, Jesus starts his ministry by watching the last ones in society with a different look, by announcing them a prospect of love: *'Blessed...'* (Mt 5, 3-12). It is in this prospect of love which he spoke to the *'small people of the countryside'*, that is to say the misfits of his time, those who live in difficult conditions, by proclaiming them happy. They are happy because God acts to free them from their inhuman situation. It is the prospect of a liberated future which urges Jesus to call them to joy. The decisive hour is about to ring when the helpless will be defended by God, when the excluded will be welcomed, and when justice will be done for the oppressed people. Jesus feels his heart stirring: he feels compassion for those who are hungry and thirsty, or are stricken by illness or death; he feels tenderness for those who weep or are humiliated or persecuted, he is merciful for those who acknowledge they are miserable or sinners.

Heart of Jesus, generous with those who invoke you.

Jesus does not limit himself to speeches, or teaching considered as having authority: *‘I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and revealing them to little children’*. (Mt 11,25-30). Thus Jesus expresses how much he appreciates the celestial Father to have chosen to reveal the secrets of God’s kingdom not to the great and powerful, but to the small ones, since the latter have an open and humble heart, ready to welcome the message of God’s kingdom. In front of the miracles accomplished by Jesus, they understand the greatness of heart of the one who takes on himself the suffering of the brothers. The heart of Jesus is like the shepherd’s heart who loves his sheep, of the master who prefers those who listen willingly to do his will, the one who has learnt to love his brothers in a gratuitous and unselfish way.

Pope Francis, during the prayer of the angelus on Sunday 9th 2023, said this: *‘God reveals himself by liberating and healing the human person (...) and he does this with a gratuitous love, a love that saves. This is why Jesus praises his Father, because his greatness consists in love and he never works outside of love’*.

THE BELIEVER’S HEART.

The heart decides man’s depth; it is the measure of each person’s inner experience, as of the communication between men : The faithful believer has a model to watch : the heart of Jesus, abyss of all virtues. What impact the depth and interiority of the heart of Jesus had on his eyewitnesses? Does the baptized let himself be attracted by this model, humble and meek of heart? Does the priest and the consecrated person imitate Jesus in his obedience to the Father and his love for men?

The depth of the believer’s heart exists when this one is called to participate to that of Jesus by practising the human and cardinal virtues.

A) The evangelists have *‘(drawn) up accounts of the events that have reached their fulfilment among us, as these were handed down to us, by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word’* (Lk 1, 1-2). By sharing the life of Jesus, they could observe his way of acting, seize his deep motivations, letting themselves be attracted by his interiority. Mathew had seized the catechetical character of the teaching of Jesus, the depth of life of the community wanted by the Master, the balance between past and present (you have been told... I tell you). At the center of Mark’s Gospel, lies the paschal mystery from which come the thematic lines, such as the identity of Jesus and the life of his disciples.

Luke was given the appellation of '*scribe of God's mercy*'. Saint Augustin recognizes the extraordinary wisdom of John's Gospel, deriving from his special intimacy with Jesus. How couldn't we notice in these four evangelists the heart of Jesus attentive (Mathew), lit up (Mark), merciful (Luke), passionate (John)?

B) The baptized christian should adopt Solomon's prayer : 'Solomon loved Yahweh : he followed the precepts of his father David' (1King 3,3). Solomon, considering his young age and the social challenges to face, is asking: 'So give your servant a heart to understand how to govern your people, how to discern between good and evil'. (1Kings 3.9)

What path must the baptized christian follow, what attitude must he adopt, how can he watch over his heart so that it is always docile and humble?

1) To live his humanity fully. A moral principle says: 'any authentically human man or woman is authentically christian as well'; Here, we have to choose: either be 'just' only human, or choose to rebuild in ourselves the perfect image wanted by the Creator since the beginning ; Our model is Jesus 'humble and meek of heart'.

2) To practise the virtues, to be a credible witness through one's actions . The virtues are like blood vessels carrying blood from the tissues of the body to the heart, inside a circulatory system of arteries and capillaries . Thus, human life, sustained by the gift of theological virtues, improves itself by practising the cardinal virtues (arteries) and their daughters (capillaries) .

3) To form a good, docile, sensitive, unified, lit up heart by practising :

- *prudence*. It measures, before acting the possible consequences of the action while avoiding useless risks for oneself and for the others. In the baptized person, it directs the intellect in each activity in order to discern what is just, and allows to reach the ultimate aim of man . From it, virtues such as wisdom, ingenuity and sagacity are deriving.

- *justice*. It shows itself in virtues such as equity, loyalty and rectitude in giving and sharing generously .

- *strength*. From it, are proceeding such virtues as perseverance, courage and tenacity to face the difficulties and challenges of life with a noble soul .

- *temperance*. From it are proceeding virtues such as moderation, self-control and control

of the society, which control the impulses and desires for mild, patient life.

O Heart of Jesus, shape me according to your example, teach me how to have a humble heart, make me meek and patient, fill me with your Spirit and love!



For reflection.

1. Which quality of the heart of Jesus appeals to me more?
2. To succeed in my life, I should make my conditions more stable, to identify the operational principles, to choose consequently the actions and concrete acts to realize. Perhaps I happen to go astray in the peripheries of action, and to forget the centrality of my being.
3. Among the cardinal and human virtues, is there one which attracts me, and one which upsets me?



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Cordis Jesu

