

SIGN OF SALVATION

The Sacred Heart of Jesus

by

Edouard Glotin, S.J.

Translated from the French

by

Carl J. Moell, S.J.

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER
3 Stephen Ave., New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11040

Painting on front cover by
Brother Venzo, S.J.
copyright 1983

Nihil Obstat: John Leonard, S.J.
Censor: Theol. Deput.

Imprimi Protest: + Desmondus, Archiep.
Dublinen, Hib Primas
March 10, 1989

The **Nihil Obstat** and **Imprimatur** are a declaration that a book or pamphlet is considered to be free from doctrinal or moral error. It is not implied that those who have granted the **Nihil Obstat** and **Imprimatur** agree with the contents, opinions or statements expressed.

ISBN 0 901335 86 X

All rights reserved. No part of this pamphlet may be reproduced in any manner without written permission of the author.

Printed in U.S.A.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I. AGE-OLD LITURGICAL CULT: "SALVIFIC" IMAGES

II. EXEGESIS OF SAINT JOHN: THE SIGN OF THE ONE PIERCED

1. The sign of Saint John is "cultic."
2. The sign of the PIERCED HEART sums up this central idea of Christianity.
3. The entire Gospel of Saint John is structured to bring out the revelation of this sign of salvation.
 - (a) The episode of the piercing of the Heart is the key to the Johannine message.
 - (b) Saint John expressly wished to make the pierced Heart a "salvific symbol."

III. PROGRESS IN THE TRADITION: THE SYMBOL OF THE HEART

1. WORSHIP OF THE HEART OF JESUS
AS INDICATED IN JOHN 19:37.
 - (a) Saint John directs the attention of the Church to the One who has been pierced.

- (b) Saint John predicts that this attention of the Church will be turned unfailingly to the sign of salvation.
- (c) For Saint John, it is the sign of the One Pierced which will direct the development of Christian worship.
- (d) The attention of believers to the pierced Christ ought to be one of love and reparation.
- (e) This attention to the One Pierced will bring spiritual benefits.
- (f) This loving and fruitful attention will entail a certain form of contemplation.

2. TRADITION REVEALS THE "SECRET OF THE HEART."

- (a) The legitimate transition from worship of the wound in Christ's side to that of His Heart surpasses all human logic.
- (b) Only the Holy Spirit could reveal to the Church the meaning hidden in the piercing of Christ's side.
- (c) One cannot discover the secret of the Heart of Jesus except through personal contact with the Saviour.
- (d) The secret of the Heart gives us the secret of the fruitfulness of the paschal mystery.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSION.

INTRODUCTION

Is there something of a premonition in the fact that Pope John Paul II, in his first encyclical letter to the Christian people, defined the mystery of man in reference to the mystery of the Heart of Christ?

After he had noted that "the inner mystery of man is expressed in biblical, and even in non-biblical, language by the word *heart*," and that, according to the Second Vatican Council, the Son of God "has in a certain way united Himself with every human being and loved with a human heart," he continues:

"The redemption of the world—this tremendous mystery of love in which creation is renewed—is, in its deepest roots, the fullness of justice in a human heart, *the Heart of the Firstborn Son*, so that it may become justice in the hearts of many human beings, predestined from eternity in the Firstborn Son to be children of God and called to love" (*Redemptor Hominis*, par. 9).

These statements are the conclusion of a long and intense development of the subject in the encyclical. As the author himself declared, the letter contains "the thoughts which matured within him during his years of service, first as a priest and then as a bishop." Immediately, one has the impression that for the present Pope, just as for his immediate predeces-

sors to whose authority he refers (John XXIII, *Inde a primis*, 1961; and Paul VI, *Investigabiles Christi*, 1965) the mystery of the Heart of Jesus has always occupied a privileged place in the life of the Church.

"We desire", wrote Paul VI in 1965, on the occasion of the second century of the granting of the liturgical feast of the Sacred Heart to the Kingdom of Poland, "that the doctrinal foundation of this mystery be explained to all categories of the faithful, in ways that are best adapted and most complete." This is also the modest purpose of the following pages. They sum up briefly the main lines of development which the Pope had presented like this in 1956: "It is not a question of just any kind of a devotion, which each one is free to put in second place or even to depreciate . . . We are dealing with a very ancient form of worship, solidly based on Scripture, in accord with *traditional doctrine* and the sacred *Liturgy*" (Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, pars. 62 and 64).

To understand the threefold examination we intend to undertake—Worship, Scripture and Tradition—we must always remember that devotion to the Heart of Jesus is derived from the worship given, from the very beginnings of Christianity, to the wounded humanity of the Saviour.

I

Age-Old Liturgical Cult: "Salvific" Images

When we look at the oldest sacred images in the ancient liturgical cult of the Latin Church—in the Roman catacombs—we cannot but be struck by the recurrence of a theme very close to our modern "Sacred Heart," that of the *Good Shepherd*. Originating, it seems, during the second half of the first century, this image dominates all the funereal art of the crypts. Quite soon, it definitively took over the central position as a medallion of the vault. Thus, from the beginning, the Christ of these early underground Eucharists appears as the Johannine Christ: "He who lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Then, beginning with the peace of Constantine in the fourth century, when the second type of Christian art developed, there is a new symbolic figure of Christ also inspired by the Fourth Gospel. Alongside that of the triumphant Christ, King and supreme Lawgiver, it adorns the mosaics in the apse or the trium-

phal arch of some basilicas. No longer that of the Shepherd, but what might be called a complementary figure, that of the **Lamb** with a halo, usually standing on the mystic mountain from which flow rivers of living water: "If people thirst, let them come to me and drink" (John 7:37).

In both of these images of the Shepherd and the Lamb, it is always the person of Christ who is represented as the **source of salvation**, at the same time the conqueror and the saviour. To put it even better, Christ is depicted as the one who "gives for our salvation" and the one who is "given for our salvation," giving us life and giving us His life.

Thus, even from its most remote origins, Christian pictorial art has rigorously applied the principle of Saint Paul: "Even though we once regarded Christ **according to the flesh**, we regard him thus no longer" (2 Cor 5:16). The Christ of the paleo-Christian frescoes and of the post-Constantinian mosaics is the Christ **according to the Spirit**. The primitive Christian artists never attempted a physical **portrait** of Jesus, but a symbolic representation of the act in which he accomplishes Christian salvation.

On the ceilings of the catacombs, next to representations of the Good Shepherd carrying a lamb, are found images of Daniel in the midst of the lions, Jonah vomited forth by the sea monster, or Moses striking the rock. These

emphasize once again the symbolic intent: from the very beginning there is the notion of a **salvific image**, that is, a **representation of Christian salvation as a victory over death**. And when, from the beginning of the fourth century, funereal art was arranged according to cycles of narratives, it is still under the theme of "soteria" (salvation), of the salvific activity of Christ, wonder-worker and saviour of all.

Very soon the **cross** (without the Crucified) came to occupy the centre of certain apses, and in the Basilica of Fondi, toward the beginning of the fifth century, the cross is found joined to the mystic rock on which stands the victorious Lamb and from which originated the four rivers of Paradise. The crowning point of these "salvific images" is, in the 13th century, the first **crucifix** in a Roman apse that has come down to us: that in the Church of St Clement. Jesus, whom they have dared at last to present to the crowds of the faithful on the cross, appears there as the fruit of the Tree of Life from which protrude in luxuriant growth the branches of the ecclesial vine and from which flow the evangelical rivulets of living water: all of these traits depend on the writings of Saint John.

If we now try to follow these salvific images to their conclusion, we come to see that little by little they all move into second place except the last one mentioned, that of the Crucified.

This one retains its medieval realism, while preserving also its Johannine profile: the Saviour, although already dead, has his eyes wide open and a living gaze on his face, as a sign of the anticipated victory over the grave, with the open wound in his side from which flow blood and water. There sometimes appears at the foot of the cross a female personage, image of the Church, who collects the life-giving streams in a chalice.

Just as this representation of the pierced Christ came, little by little, to direct the devotion of contemplatives toward the Heart of Jesus, so it is interesting to situate it clearly in the Gospel of Saint John where every cultic image of Christ seems to have its source. Following this liturgical iconography, biblical exegesis will reveal an aspect of the mystery of Christ which is generally too little emphasized.

Exegesis of Saint John: The Sign of the One Pierced

Accustomed as we are to the reading of the Gospel, we frequently overlook what is truly extraordinary in the account of the ***piercing of the side of Jesus by the soldier's lance*** (John 19: 31-37). We are tempted to see it as a unique incident, but without a strong link to the whole of revelation.

In reality, the most recent exegesis establishes with scientific exactness that the Fathers and Doctors had good reason to hand down to medieval piety the sign of the One Pierced as the central image of the mystery of salvation. In fact, ***for Saint John, the sign of the pierced Christ is a symbolic summary of the whole of Christianity.***

Without entering into a detailed proof of this statement, we can establish it using the following principles:

1. From a literary point of view, ***the Gospel of Saint John is "cultic."*** It is not by chance that salvific images are found precisely in this Gospel: John ***wanted*** to create them. We can

say that his problem was this: how to compress into a small number of **signs**, images suitable to nourish the worship (faith and prayer) of the Christian community, the redemptive meaning of the death of Christ?

The Synoptic Gospels have given us a reflection on the mystery of redemption. Saint Paul has given us the theory: it is a mystery of death and life. Finally Saint John arrives to give us this theology in powerful, evocative images, all of which tend to express this central idea of Christianity: **death produces life**. We can say that each of these images reproduces the fundamental idea of the brief parable of the **grain of wheat which dies** (John 12:24): a rich harvest is already present in germ in Christ's death, since the Saviour conquered death by His Resurrection.

2. The sign of the PIERCED HEART sums up this central idea of Christianity. In fact, more than any other signs in Saint John, it expresses this idea of the redemptive fruitfulness of the death of Christ. It bears an inscription of death—the wound—and the symbol of life: blood and water, which for Semites indicates vitality and fruitfulness. We must note carefully: the Heart is pierced **after** the death of Jesus, and the signs of life gush forth even **before** the Resurrection. This double event is not intelligible except symbolically. Because the Gospel of Saint John is cultic, the piercing

in death must be considered as the last **ritual** gesture performed on the Lamb, of which “not a bone shall be broken” (John 19:36), and the flow of blood and water as a **prelibation** of the gift of the Spirit who will be given after Jesus has been glorified (John 7:38-39).

This double symbolic event takes place in the same instant: “One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water” (John 19:34). We have here a type of **instantaneity**, in the photographic sense of the word, which sums up in regard to our faith the fruitfulness of the death of Jesus. **The pierced Heart is a symbolic summary of the paschal mystery.**

3. The entire Gospel of Saint John is structured to bring out the revelation of this sign of salvation. The immense progress accomplished during the past thirty years in the study of the exegesis of Saint John enables us to determine with great precision the structure of the Fourth Gospel. Exegetically we can say this:

(a) **The episode of the piercing of the Heart is the key to the Johannine message.** It is Saint John himself who takes great care to bring out the importance of this event of the salvific outpouring from the pierced side.

In the Gospel, he affirms the **historical certitude** of the fact by a solemn testimony based on two prophecies (John 19:35-37). None of

the preceding **signs** of the Gospel are attested with such force: this is the last and, as it were, the final outcome of the others.

In his First Letter (5:6-8), Saint John determines the **theological significance** of the testimony given in the Gospel. The outpouring on Calvary proves that Jesus did not save us "by water" alone, but "by water and blood." In other words, to free the Spirit (designated by **water**), He had to give His life (designated by **blood**) on the cross.

(b) **Saint John expressly wished to make the pierced Heart a "salvific symbol."** In other words, he wanted to render palpable, in a telling image, this theological truth that the fruitfulness of the Resurrection of Christ is found in germ in the sacrifice of the cross.

The most solid indication of this intention of the evangelist is found at the beginning of his work in the image of the **bronze serpent** (John 3:14-15): it is necessary for Jesus to be "lifted up" on the cross so that we may have faith and life. In the idea of Saint John, this prophecy is fulfilled at the moment of the **piercing**: the flow of living water is to produce faith in those who receive it (John 19:35: "that you also may believe"). In fact, on Easter Sunday, the Spirit is poured forth at the very moment that Jesus shows the wound in his side to the eleven apostles (John 20: 20-22). And when Thomas saw it, he uttered the first act of faith

in the divinity of Jesus in all of history: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Now, Saint John, who knew his Scriptures, was certainly aware that the Book of Wisdom described the bronze serpent as a **salvific symbol**: "they received a 'token of deliverance' to remind them of Your law's command. For he who turned toward it was saved, not by what he saw, but by You, the Saviour of all" (Wisdom 16:6-7).

Now that the Old Law is abolished, Saint John can substitute for this ancient symbol that of the **true** bronze serpent and invite his believers to contemplate the universal Saviour by "looking on Him whom they have pierced" (John 19:37).

Finally, if one recalls that Saint John is the last to write and that the revelation of the two Testaments ends with him, one is justified in concluding: **Saint John has made the sign of the pierced Heart the key to the Scriptures and the central symbol of Christianity.**

An objection can be raised here: Saint John does not speak of the **Heart** but only of the pierced **side**. The Church has, assuredly, no doubt about the practical identity of these two words. Nevertheless, an examination of this difficulty is still needed and this forces us to take up again, on the level of spiritual experience, the scriptural data of the Fourth Gospel.

Progress in the Tradition: The Symbol of the Heart

When one seriously studies the development of the worship directed to the humanity of Christ, a two-fold fact immediately strikes one's attention: (1) the importance of the symbol of the Heart, and (2) its gradual appearance in Christian piety through the worship given to the wound in the side. It is not a symbol that appeared suddenly with Margaret Mary. A large number of saints, belonging to very different schools of spirituality, have had mystical experiences that were very similar to hers. In fact one author has gone as far as stating that, so to speak, the whole story of the "interior life" of the Church could be written in connection with this transcendent sign of love, the pierced Heart of Jesus.

This "interior life" has a remarkable homogeneity. It is by almost imperceptible steps that the Church, in the words of teachers and comtemplatives, was led from the exterior to

the interior of the humanity of Jesus, from the visible wounds to the Heart hidden in the wound of the side. Until recently, it was St Bernard who was credited with being the first to suggest that the lance pierced the Heart. He said this when comparing and juxtaposing two verses from the Psalms. But now each day new texts are being discovered which push further back into the past the true origins of devotion to the Heart of the Saviour.

All this is happening as if to verify the growing intuition of Pius XII that "the devotion by which we honour the love of God and of Jesus Christ for the human family, under the sign of the pierced Heart of Christ on the Cross, has never been entirely unknown to the pious practice of the faithful" (*Haurietis Aquas*. par. 47).

Yet today certain opinions are emerging which tend to consider this development in the worship of Christ under the sign of the Heart of Jesus as a type of infidelity to the primitive data of Tradition. In reality, it is just the opposite: this development appears to be situated exactly at the centre of Christian worship such as the Apostolic Church established it. Not only does the image of the pierced Heart constitute a legitimate interpretation of the Johanne sign of the pierced Christ, but **the evangelist himself indicates for the generation which would come after him the principle itself for a mystical deepening of his own vision**. To be convinced of this, it is sufficient

to analyze closely verse 19:37: "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced."

Let us take up for a moment the scriptural argument to show how this verse already contains in germ the traditional devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Then we can look at its development in Tradition. For the sake of brevity, I will only indicate the general lines of argument without developing supporting proofs in depth.

1. Worship of the Heart of Jesus as indicated in John 19:37.

Our scriptural study of the passage on the piercing led us to the following conclusion: for Saint John the pierced Christ is the *true* bronze serpent, the great sign of salvation for believers. If we now focus our attention on verse 19:37 ("they shall look on Him whom they have pierced"), which is a decisive one because it is sort of a conclusion to the entire passage, we can put forward, in turn, the following statements:

(a) ***Saint John directs the attention of the Church to the One who has been pierced.*** Consistent with his own exegetical principles, Saint John incorporates into his own account the prophecy of Zechariah, which originally concerned the **Jews** of his day, considering it as not yet totally fulfilled. Following on Zechariah, John in turn writes: "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced." He explicitly

means **Christians**, whether those in the community at the time of his writing or those who would come after them.

The Magisterium has made this interpretation its own: "It is to Christians of all ages that the words of the prophet Zechariah were addressed, words applied by John the Evangelist to Christ on the Cross. 'They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced' " (***Haurietis Aquas***, par. 50).

(b) ***Saint John predicts that this attention of the Church will be turned unfailingly to the sign of salvation.*** Since we are dealing with a prophecy, that is, the Word of God spoken by the Spirit about the incarnate Son, we must take these words in their fullest sense, not as a simple invitation given to Christians, but as the unfailing assurance that this contemplation of the pierced Christ will remain alive in the Church until the end of time.

(c) ***For Saint John, it is the sign of the One Pierced which will direct the development of Christian worship.*** This follows logically from what we have already established, namely, that on the one hand, the sign of the the One Pierced is for Saint John a symbolic summary of Christianity ("the central salvific sign"), and on the other hand, the contemplation of the Church, according to Saint John, will surely be drawn to this sign.

We arrive at the same conclusion when we begin an exegesis of verse 12:32 "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself." Christ, "lifted up like the serpent in the desert" (3:14), is, as we have seen, Christ crucified as He appears at the moment of the piercing, the source of life, to the fruitfulness of which both blood and water give profound testimony: they spring from the awesome moment of Christ's death. This verse, therefore, predicts the unfailing attraction which Christ will exercise over human beings, particularly in regard to believers who will consider Him as the One whom they have pierced.

(d) ***The attention of believers to the pierced Christ ought to be one of love and reparation.*** Saint John himself does not specify the type of attention we should pay to the One Pierced. But, for the Christian community of the first century, the verse, "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced," could only have one meaning, that of the prophet Zechariah. We read in the Hebrew version: "They look on **Me** whom they have pierced: they shall mourn for **Him** as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him as one weeps over a first-born" (Zech. 12:10).

Saint John has translated from the Greek version: "on **Him** whom they have pierced." It is not only the "older brother" who is mourned

with love; it is the "Only Son" of the Father whom we ourselves have pierced.

(e) ***This attention to the One Pierced will bring spiritual benefits.*** In fact, just as the Hebrews in the wilderness were healed of the bite of the serpents by him whom they contemplated under the "salvific symbol" of the bronze serpent, "so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him (= whoever looks on Him with faith under the sign of the One Pierced) may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).

(f) ***This loving and fruitful attention will entail a certain form of contemplation.*** In Johannine language, "to see," like "to know," designates an activity of the spirit more than of the eye. The way believers look on the One Pierced is not a look of dazed astonishment but an introduction into the mystery hidden under this image of Christ on the cross, whose open wound invites the spiritual "eye" of the believer to look for the secret source from which flow streams of living water.

Tradition Reveals the "Secret of the Heart."

"Go then, you are turned in on yourself, to the side of Christ crucified; and there apply your spirit to contemplation of the **secret of His Heart.**" This is no longer Saint John speaking but a witness of the Tradition, Saint Catherine

of Siena, echoing his appeal. Saint Catherine also puts these words into the mouth of God the Father: "I have allowed His side to be pierced in order to reveal the **secret of His Heart**, which I have made a hidden refuge where you are permitted to see and to taste the ineffable love which I have for you." At a distance of fourteen centuries, we are in the spiritual context of the Fourth Gospel: our attention to the One Pierced reveals a secret. But the Church had already been working for a long time on deciphering this secret of which Saint John gave so significant an intimation: **the Heart of Jesus is a symbol of His love.**

I shall not attempt to trace the broad outline of the stages by which the Church has come to this explicit knowledge of the mystery of the pierced heart of the Saviour. I shall simply point out briefly the nature of this progress and its stage-by-stage development.

(a) The legitimate transition from worship of the wound in Christ's side to that of His Heart surpasses all human logic.

We will be completely at a loss if we look for an explanation of the worship of the Heart of Jesus with our feeble human reason. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to accept the idea that the worship of the Heart of Jesus was, in its origins, implicitly contained in the Johannine account of the piercing of Christ's side.

Undoubtedly, we can see in the thinking of the Church "that what is written of the pierced side of Jesus can likewise be said of His Heart, which was certainly touched by the spear which the soldier thrust to assure that Christ was really dead" (*Haurietis Aquas*, par. 39). But this completely material logic of the account would never have given rise, by itself, to devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

The transition from worship of the wound in the side to that of the Heart of Jesus could never have taken place by means of a "Cartesian" logic but only by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(b) Only the Holy Spirit could reveal to the Church the meaning hidden in the piercing of Christ's side. Here we have, then, a case of the true development of faith in the light of revealed truth.

This development is doctrinal and experiential.

On the one hand, **the Fathers of the Church** have elaborated a complete symbolic theory of the birth of the Church from the pierced side. Fruitful to the thought of Saint John, they saw water and blood as signs of the fruitfulness of Baptism and Eucharist.

On the other hand, **the mystics of the Middle Ages**, meditating on the data of this patristic theology, have uncovered the secret of this

fruitfulness: the love of God which endures forever.

They express this discovery experientially. They discovered, so to speak, within themselves the entire mystery of the fruitfulness of redemptive Love, and in this experience they discovered the love which forms its substance.

Obedient to this symbolic logic, they could not accurately translate this experience except by means of the ancient nuptial symbol of love and of gift: **the Heart**.

(c) **One cannot discover the secret of the Heart of Jesus except through personal contact with the Saviour.** Among all the signs which serve to express human love, the symbol of the heart is one of the most intimate and the most delicate. It is part of the language by which two beings who love each other affirm their exclusive union. Legitimate reticence restricts the use of this language to times of intimacy.

The revelation which Jesus has made of His Heart is the sign of an overwhelming friendship for the Church and for each one of the faithful in particular. The Lord indicates in this way that He wants to enter into personal communion with the Church, His spouse, and with each one of us.

It may seem paradoxical, at a time when we are discovering the language of the signs and their interpersonal value, that our lives of

faith and prayer no longer have recourse to this symbol of the Heart of Jesus, which expresses what is most exquisite in the gift God makes to us of Himself.

(d) **The secret of the Heart gives us the secret of the fruitfulness of the paschal mystery.** We have already shown that the pierced Heart was for Saint John the summing up of the paschal mystery. The sign of the pierced side, from which flowed blood and water, expresses in fact the fruitfulness of the act of redemption: Life springs forth from Death.

But, in accepting the invitation of Saint John to decipher the secret of this sign, the Church has discovered the symbolism hidden in the heart: the love of God for sinful human beings. From now on, every Christian can say with Saint Paul: "He loved **me** and delivered Himself up for **me** (Gal. 2:20).

By the blood and water flowing from Christ's Heart. God is telling us that it is the personal love of Jesus that is the source for the Church of the redemptive fruitfulness of Baptism and Eucharist, that is to say, of all supernatural life. It was for love that Christ died, and it is from His wounded Heart that, under the symbol of living water, love still flows. Love explains all, death as well as life. The paschal mystery in its totality is a mystery of love.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

By reading this booklet, you have followed me in an exploration which all too few undertake today. I hope you do not regret the course we have taken together. I have tried, clumsily no doubt, to make you "see" Jesus in the very act where—in a way, that is, after all, extremely simple—He has revealed His Heart to His beloved spouse, the Church. Perhaps at the beginning you were curious to see that someone is still writing on a topic you believed to be outdated. But then you let me lead you by the hand.

Our first steps together were not too difficult, even if we had to go down into the obscurity of the catacombs. Lifting our heads toward the ceiling, we discovered there the "Sacred Heart" with all the bucolic traits of the Good Shepherd: we found there a small touch of originality that was worth the inconvenience of a stiff neck. But we immediately returned to the open air of the Rome of Pope John Paul II, who was presented as our guide. Reassured by the discovery of the principle of the *salvific image*—a little key to be kept safely in your pocket—it was time to end our archaeological journey through the ancient basilicas and to turn towards Jerusalem.

I had, I might say, noticed the Bible under your arm and I guessed that our first discover-

ies made you impatient to turn to chapter 19 of Saint John. Here we delayed for a long time, for the time necessary to verify the quality of the "good soil" of the mystery of the Heart of Jesus. It was then as if I had invited you to take a picture and to fix "photographically" in your memory an historical moment: that of the "paschal act" in its original outpouring, where all at once, ***without any break in continuity***—and note well, here is the only instance of anything like this in the entire Gospel—Life springs totally anew from Death, the fountain from the wound. Satisfied, you were perhaps ready to call a halt to the discussion of the topic, when I held you back. Tradition, what does it mean to you?

If up to now, with the help of those defense mechanisms we all have, you have evaded the mystery of the Heart of Jesus which is so conveniently set aside today, is it not perhaps because, after having ignored the Bible for such a long time, you now rely on it so exclusively that you jump with both feet across the centuries which separate us from those who wrote it? Thus you have only a two-dimensional view of the text. You lack the "third dimension," which leads you from the external to the internal, from the wound to the Heart.

At any rate, remember one thing. You will never reach the best part of the mystery of Christ, the unique and enchanting secret of the pierced Heart, as long as you remain unaware

of the exact way in which the Holy Spirit guided the disciples of Jesus "into the truth." (John 16:13). Are you shocked at this statement of Vatican II: "It is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about all revealed truths" (*Dei Verbum*, par. 9)? Then meditate on the paragraph preceding this text on divine revelation:

The Tradition that comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. ***There is a growth in insight into the realities and words which have been handed down. This comes about through the contemplation and study of believers who treasure these things in their hearts*** (cf. Luke 2:19, 51), through the intimate sense of spiritual realities they experience, through the preaching of those who have received, along with episcopal succession, the sure charism of truth.

The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this tradition, whose riches are poured out in the practice and life of the believing and praying Church. By means of the same Tradition the full canon of the sacred books is known to the Church, and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and constantly actualized in the Church. Thus God, who spoke in the past, continues to

converse with the Spouse of His beloved Son (*Dei Verbum*, par. 8).

Do not refuse, then, to look upon Jesus precisely where we have struck and pierced Him. This ***reparative*** look of love and "compassion" is, so to speak, the focal point of all of Tradition. Not only is the mystery of the Heart of Jesus one of the revealed mysteries, but it has the very clear function of pointing out where we find ***the centre of equilibrium for all revelation***.

Treasure in your heart, in the school of the Mother of God, the Johannine vision of the One Pierced. Resolutely enter through study and prayer into the dialogue of the well-beloved Son with His Church, whom He loves and for whom He gave Himself (cf. Eph. 5:25). And let us offer ourselves "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1).



APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER (League of the Sacred Heart)

The Apostleship of Prayer is a union of the faithful who, by their daily oblation, unite themselves with the Eucharistic Sacrifice in which the work of our redemption is continuously accomplished. By this vital bond with Christ, they cooperate in the salvation of the world.

But this bond with Christ the High Priest necessarily requires an intimate bond with him through personal love. For this reason, the Apostleship of Prayer has given singular importance to devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

Each Sunday, the celebrant leads the people in offering themselves, with Christ, to God the Father. It is important that they extend this self-offering throughout the week embracing all their day-to-day activity—their prayer, their work in the office or home, their joys and recreation, their tensions, headaches and sacrifices. This is how the laity **"consecrate their world to God."**

The Apostleship of Prayer is a form of spirituality that helps them do this in a simple, concrete way. It gives them a technique—the Daily Offering, and it gives them a motive—the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It presents them with a practical way of living life in union with Christ and making Him truly present to the world. And they will adopt this way of life

readily because of the compelling need they feel to respond to God's love; a love He has revealed in a visible, human fashion in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

That is why Pope Pius XII called the Apostleship of Prayer **"the sum total of Christian perfection"** and **"the most perfect form of Christian life."** It is why Pope John Paul II said the practice of the Daily Offering is **"of fundamental importance in the life of each and every one of the faithful."**