

dominion of men, so that in future no man shall claim any part of it as his property, and it has made it by a special title the house of God and the place where His glory is to dwell. (3) As long as this basilica will last, the ceremony of dedication has linked it with devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The subject of my discourse, therefore, seems to have been determined in the very act of dedication. I am called on by the circumstances of the occasion to speak to you on the instructive and tender devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Divine Founder of the Church, Who promised to be with her by His efficient assistance even to the consummation of the world, and to send her the Paraclete to teach her all truth and to show her the things that are to come, recalls or suggests from time to time special devotions according to the varying necessities or advantages of His kingdom on earth. And every such devotion is intended not only to excite the piety of the faithful, but even still more to guard or develop some dogmatic truth. Any devotion that is not based on solid doctrine is apt to degenerate into superstition. No devotion bears the stamp of a divine sanction that is not calculated to enlighten the understanding as well as to inflame the heart. It is because devotion to the Sacred Heart complies so admirably with these two conditions that it has spread so widely and produced such abundant fruits in modern times.

From the beginning some had erred regarding the humanity, some regarding the divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ. Two centuries ago the foundation was laid, in the philosophy of Descartes and Spinoza, for the revival and wide propagation in modern times of those ancient errors. Both faith and piety were threatened. Jesus the Incarnate God is the foundation of Christian faith, and the centre of Christian piety. Any error, therefore, that assails or obscures

**the Incarnation**

is destructive both of faith and piety. On the other hand, any devotion that defends and illustrates the Incarnation fulfils the double office of prophet and preacher.

Such is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To understand this devotion, therefore, we must have clearly before us what the Incarnation means. It means that when the man had fallen from original justice and the hope of future happiness, the Eternal Son of God, in a mystery of love which human understanding cannot fathom, determined to redeem the fallen race. He determined to do this not by employing man or angel to make partial payment of the debt, but by making perfect satisfaction Himself to the Eternal Father for the accumulated sins of mankind, original and actual. As God, He could not suffer, nor consequently make such satisfaction. Neither could man nor angel reach to such merit as to be capable of paying the almost infinite debt. It required, therefore, the infinite dignity of a Divine Person, united to a possible nature, to pay the full price of the redemption of the world. That union was what the Incarnation effected.

The Only-begotten Son of God, the second Divine Person of the adorable Trinity, left the golden Throne of His glory in heaven and came on earth to unite our nature to His own Divine Person. That is: He took a human body and a human soul in the chaste womb of Mary and assumed them into the unity of His Divine person. In Christ, therefore, there is but one Person, and that the Divine Person of the Son of God. In all other cases, when a human soul is united to a human body, a human person results from the union. But it was not so in the case of Christ. He took the nature of man, body and soul, but He assumed that nature to Himself and made it subsist in His Divine Person. This is what is meant by the hypostatic union of the human nature to the Divine Person. If Christ had a human person He would not be God. He would be merely man, no matter how perfect. Hence He could not have redeemed the world by offering full satisfaction for sin. Again: contrary to the definition of the Council of Ephesus, Mary would not be the Mother of God, but of a mere man. The Word would not have been 'made flesh' nor 'dwelt amongst us.' Man would not have 'seen His glory' as 'the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father.'

But because there is in Christ but one Person, and that a Divine Person, there is but one agent, and to that Person and Agency all that He did and suffered must be referred. Even amongst men all that is done either by mind or body is referred to the person. We do not say that the body walks or the mind thinks, but we say that the person walks and thinks. Hence all that Christ did and suffered were the acts and sufferings of God—of the Man-God. The whole human nature, by the Incarnation, became, not indeed the Divine Nature, Which is unchangeable and from eternity, but the Nature of God. 'The countenance,' as Cardinal Manning says, in his admirable treatise, *The Glories of the Sacred Heart*, 'the countenance that gazed upon the faces of men while He "dwelt amongst them" was the face of God; the hands that cleansed the leper were the hands of God; the finger that opened the ears of the deaf was the finger of God; the feet that Mary kissed in her repentance were the feet of God; the hands that were bound with cords were the hands of God; the hands and feet that were nailed upon the cross were the hands and feet of God; and the Heart that was pierced upon the cross was the Heart of God; because the whole Humanity which the Eternal Word assumed was the Humanity of God.' But, then, dearly beloved, it may be asked, if the whole Humanity and all its parts—body and soul—were the Humanity of God, and therefore worthy of supreme worship,

**Why do we Select the Sacred Heart**

of Jesus as the special object of our worship and devotion? I answer: (1) Because even if no revelation had ever been made regarding the devotion to the Sacred Heart, from a doctrinal point of view that devotion is most useful in keeping before the mind the true doctrine of the Incarnation. By its human sympathies and intense sorrows the Sacred Heart proclaims the human nature of Christ. By the supreme worship that is due to it the Sacred Heart witnesses to the unity of Person in Christ, on account of which

such worship is due. From a doctrinal point of view, therefore, the devotion to the Sacred Heart guards the doctrine of the Incarnation, which means the union—the hypostatic union—of the Divine and the human nature in one Person. In this respect, though it has its own peculiar office, it resembles the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate.

These are the outposts—each in its own way—that guard the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God. How valuable and effective these outposts are, may be clearly seen in the history of religious belief. If the outposts are deserted, heresy and unbelief will attack the citadel of truth, and gradually the doctrine of the Incarnation will become obscured and confused. But in the Catholic Church, where these outposts have been defended against every attack, the full, complete, and consistent belief in the doctrine of the Incarnation has been always maintained.

**Passing from a doctrinal to a**

**Devotional Point of View,**

we find that piety, no less than faith, is aided by the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Nothing better calculated to stir up the pious affections and desires of the human heart than the contemplation of the love and compassion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But we must remember that the object of our devotion and worship is not merely the abstract love of Jesus for men, but the real, material Heart that beats at this moment in his sacred Body at the right hand of His Father in heaven. The heart is recognised as the seat of the affections and the symbol of all that is tenderest in human nature. It is so recognised in the common and universal language and practice of men. When Robert Bruce lay at the point of death, he remembered the vow he had made of going in person to fight for the rescue of Palestine as soon as he saw an end to his own wars at home. Not being able to fulfil his vow, he called Sir James Douglas to his side and said to him: 'Since my body cannot go thither and accomplish that which my heart hath so much desired, I have resolved to send my heart there in place of my body to fulfil my vow.' The sequel is touching. Sir James Douglas, before setting out for Jerusalem, first went to Spain to fight against the Saracens. Being surrounded by a large body of Moorish cavalry, and seeing no other hope of escape, Sir James took from his neck the casket containing the heart of Bruce and cast it from him, saying: 'Now pass onward as thou wert wont, and Douglas will follow thee or die.' These, said the chronicler, were the last words and deed of a heroic life; for Douglas fell, surrounded by his enemies. The heart of Bruce was deposited at Melrose, and the body of good Sir James in the parish church of Douglas. When O'Connell was dying at Genoa he willed his soul to heaven, his body to Ireland, and his heart to Rome. Lately we read of the fulfilment of the last wish of the Marquis of Bute, that his heart should repose in the Holy Land. That was in accordance with a feeling that lies deep down in human nature, and which is reflected in the common conversation of men.

If we wish to describe a man as benign and beneficent we say that he has a good or a kind heart. On the other hand, if a man is regarded as insensible to the wants or sufferings of his fellow-man, he is said to have a hard heart. The language of

**Holy Writ**

coincides in this respect with the common speech of men. When God would recall man to a sense of duty, it is to his heart he appeals, saying: 'Son, give Me thy Heart.' And in the New Testament our Blessed Lord, to teach us meekness and humility, expressly refers to His Sacred Heart: 'Learn of Me,' He says, 'because I am meek and humble of heart.' Again, He tells us that 'where our treasure is, there is our heart also,' or our affections and desires. In the same sense he quoted the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.' And as He assures us that it is from the heart that evil thoughts and actions go forth, so it is from the heart that loving thoughts and every manifestation of affection proceed.

Nor is there wanting in the physical constitution of man a foundation for the selection of the heart as the seat and symbol of the affections. For, as a matter of fact, the human heart is sensibly affected by the various emotions to which man is subject. It is dilated or contracted according to the feelings of joy or sorrow by which the individual may be affected.

Even in the absence of any revelation, then, the Sacred Heart of Jesus would have been rightly selected as the object of our special devotion and worship. It is the seat and symbol of the love and affection which He poured out on the children of men, collectively and individually, from the first moment His human soul was united to His Divine Person. It tells of the love He lavished on the world from His cheerless birth in the manger in Bethlehem till that love was crowned in sacrifice with immortal glory on the hill of Calvary. It tells of the words of love and pardon He spoke to poor sinners: 'Go, and sin no more'; of the miracles He performed for the afflicted; of the zeal He manifested for His Father's glory; of the intense sorrow He suffered in His agony, when His soul was 'sorrowful even unto death,' and He said: 'Stay you here and watch with Me'; of the ardent desire He had to kindle the love of God in the souls of men: 'I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?' In a word, from that Sacred Heart proceeded every thought and desire that tended to promote the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls. Nay, that Heart throbs to-day in His sacred bosom, at the right hand of the Father in heaven, with the same intense desire to see the kingdom of God established and His 'will done on earth as it is in heaven.'

Such being the case, dear brethren, should we not expect

**A Revelation**

such as was made to the Blessed Margaret Mary when the seeds of infidelity were spreading abroad and when human hearts, grown