

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS



BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS

[FOR THE PRIVATE USE OF STUDENTS]

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Opening Reflections on the SACRED HEART of JESUS

*... If the Lord set His heart on you and chose you... it was for love of you... [Dt. 7:7].
... learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart... [Mt 11:29].*

Premise¹:

[1] In the entire divine mystery, *ad extra*, there is no necessity, but endless realities that might be called “most fitting”, even “hypothetical necessities”. If God would like us to know even some of the “natural” truths about Him more certainly, more quickly and more commonly [cf. Vatican I, D-S 3005], He has to reveal. Since the Lord wants all to be saved [1 Tm 2:4], He has to help. God is infinitely free, except for His love, which is His very being: **God is love** [cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16] - which is also the very foundation of His entire Being and Freedom. As a result, within the works of God there is a perfect interior coherence, a simplicity of development. The person of prayer, as well as the theologian, marvels at this simplicity. “Wonder” should be the very first reaction in theology as a science.

[2] The fourth Evangelist alone - and the only one to do so - has given major importance to **the Piercing of the Side of Jesus Christ** [cf. Jn 21:24]. He backs up his account telling us that the one who has seen these things gives witness to it, and we know that his testimony is true [cf. Jn 21:24]. Through contemplation, study, heeding the Magisterium and the lived experience [cf. DV 8], every believer, each person of prayer and theologian are invited to fathom this mystery, beyond the cruel act that took place on a Friday afternoon long ago.

[3] In the most sublime sense of the word, the piercing of the sacred side of the Man-God is, in the highest sense of the term, a “mystery” This is an act of God Who reveals Himself, making the treasures of His divinity more intimately known and shared: “...The phrase, ‘heart of Christ’ can refer to Sacred Scripture which makes known His heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted...”². The revelation of this opening of the side of Christ has led the Church of the centuries to a higher regard and grasp of the reality of God and His Plan of Salvation.

[4] This “Death in the Afternoon” - this “Man”, exposed on the Cross, a graphic illustration of what human sin produces - is, at the same time, the divine answer to

¹ cf. Philippe Ferlay, *Coeur du Christ, mystère de Dieu*. Paris/Montreal: Mediaspaul 1995, pp. 9, ff. passim.

² cf. CCC # 112; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. in Ps 21: 11* ; cf. Ps 22:15.

the human question: Where is God? This is the Only-Begotten, the Most Beloved, the response of the deepest love of God for us all. Thanks to this cruel blow of the Roman javelin, reveals the most sublime mystery for anyone who wants to fathom more deeply the infinite love of God Himself: this is the ICON of the Invisible God [cf. Col 1:15]; this is the emanation, the “character” of the hidden divine nature [cf. Heb 1:1, f.] - whoever looks on the Pierced One will see God [cf. Jn 12:44, f; Rv 1:5]. God so loved the world that He did not spare His Only Son, but gave up His Most Beloved [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16].

[5] It is precisely due to the omnipotence of God that the power of this Sacred Heart even in Jesus’ physical death does not remain inert. This divine Heart is the Fountain of New Life - the streams of blood and water that were seen by the eye-witness to flow from it have been understood in the tradition of the Church as the Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism and Eucharist. These are sources of life through the Holy Spirit of the Risen Lord leading recipients back to the Father. The entire mystery of the Incarnation was directed toward this “Hour... in accord with the Scriptures”; the divine will manifested through the revealed Word. The reason for the coming of the son of Man was to diffuse, pour-out over the entire universe the Spirit of the Heavenly Father, with Whom the Risen Lord is filled. He had not yet sent the Spirit until He got to this Hour of His glorification [cf. Jn 7:39]. This is the greatest glory of God: this “Man”, covered with blood, with His head bowed in human death, pouring forth the love in the Person of the Spirit through His Sacred Heart. This is the Glory for the “Anawim”, for the little of the Lord, much beloved to Him. this is “Self-giving” the model of all the baptized, sharing the energy of the new life of the resurrection. The God, who is love, does not wish for, nor could He accept any love on a lesser level - the “Principle of Totality” has its paradigm here, a Model which shares its own life.

[6] The glorious reign of the Divine Son began at that precise hour. His “glory” is not to receive any empty praise, but that human beings come to share in His joy through a lived faith in Him, by putting on His mind [cf. Ph 2:5, ff.]. The coming of the Holy Spirit manifests the joy that prevails in the Father giving His love through the Revealed, Incarnate, Paschal, Eucharistic Word - embodied in the symbolism of the Sacred Heart. This is the joy that human beings receive - beyond all psychological realization of it - when they receive God’s Word in their hearts and minds; His grace in their souls, and Holy Communion in their lives. This share on earth leads to an eternal sharing in the abundance of the love manifested in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

[7] In order that the Holy Spirit issue from the Father through the Only-Begotten, Most Loved Divine Son, in accord with the divine Plan, it was necessary for that Sacred Heart not only to be bruised, or wounded - but it had to be pierced: all

believers, from Zechariah on down, are reminded: **they will look on the one they have pierced** [cf. Zc 12:10]. Since a trickle of water cannot flow through the rock unless it is opened, this is why Moses tapped the stone in the desert [cf. Ex 17:1, ff.] - and Paul reminds us that all the Exodus generation drank that same spiritual drink, and **that Rock was Christ** [cf. 1 Co 10:4]. Thus, in the divine Plan of New Creation, the Sacred Heart **had** to be opened to allow the treasury of the Most Blessed Trinity to flow from deep within the Incarnate Son of God Through this Sacred Stigmata, this life-giving blood and water, comes to us through the Lord, Holy Spirit. While the divine plan was eternal, it could only be fulfilled in the humiliation of time - which the Incarnate Word of the Eternal Father, assumed through the Holy Spirit.

[8] St. Thomas Aquinas rightly reasoned that the humanity of the Divine Word is the “conjoined instrument” through which all grace flows from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, for humanity. The devotion to the Sacred Heart would make clear that the precise source of this would be the “Heart” of God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The divine love is expressed through this Sacred Heart - which makes of this devotion the ultimate point of Trinitarian revelation: all originates in the Father; this infinite love shines through the opening in the Heart of the Crucified; the rays of light as the life-giving streams issuing forth from the Father in the Person of the Spirit, bestowed on human beings of all ages.

†††

Early Biblical Uses

Psalm 119

[1] Without extraordinary intellectual effort, one could easily meditate on the use of “heart” throughout the Word of God. As this devotion to the Sacred Heart is indeed steeped in Scripture, this source is font of profound reflections on this means of reaching into the very mystery of God, and a deeper appreciation of His plan of mercy. The many books of the Bible, in the end, are one - beyond the striking diversity of books and literary types, there is in this inspired work **the hidden project of God**, begun before the origin of the centuries, and totally drawing toward a central image. If there is any one “Icon” that could epitomize the biblical message, surely it is the Cross of Calvary - but also, for devotees, the Sacred Heart image. The ICON that stands before us is that of His pierced Heart, that Heart perfectly handed over to His Heavenly Father. The Inspired Word of God can reveal to us the secrets of the human heart - this offers a sublime catechesis for this central devotion in the recent history of the Church.

[2] One method might be to read the Bible from Genesis to the Apocalypse, carefully noting each time the word “heart” appears. In this way, perhaps, all the

wealth of the teaching on the mystery of the “heart” might come to the fore. What is done here is to choose a Psalm, one of those ancient Canticles of the People of God where the deepest sentiments of their lives would unfold. Through prayer, the deepest truths are expressed. These sentiments of a sublime faith were riveted in the Covenant of Mercy initiated by God Himself. This is the Covenant that the Lord Jesus would fulfill as the New and Everlasting Covenant unto the remission of sin. It is well known that Jesus Himself made abundant use of these Psalms in His lifetime. He gave to these ancient verses a new and sublime meaning.

[3] Through these ancient words, He has revealed to us the deepest motions of His own heart, the profound attachment of His will to that of the Father, in behalf of human beings. It would not be hard to imagine Jesus: either as a boy, or grown man, pondering in His heart His own slow prayerful recitation of **Ps 119, In Praise of the Divine Law [TORAH]** - this “alphabetical” Psalm of eight verses for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, making this the longest of all the compositions in the Psalter. Jesus’ use of this elevates these already powerful words of someone thousands of years ago, raising his mind and heart to God, pondering the mystery of the TORAH. Jesus used these human expressions to indicate **His divine attachment to the Father’s Will**.

[4] This “Law” is chanted throughout this entire Psalm in all its beauty and power - the underlying precept is the infinite love that unites Jesus Christ to His Father. This is Jesus’ “**constitutional filiation**”, the ultimate reason of His being, the food of His existence. This will lead inexorably, and paradoxically freely, to the total sacrifice of Himself on Calvary and to the ultimate revelation of the invisible God through the open side of Jesus Christ. The “composition of place” in this Psalm is to imagine Jesus praying this Himself: as He may have been doing in His Sermon on the Mount [cf. Mt 5:3, ff.]. Jesus prayed these sacred canticles all through His life. He enriched these ancient prayers with the wealth of His own Sacred Heart, in order to prepare us to receive fully the riches of the revelation that He wishes to make of Himself. It would be relatively simple for a person of faith to think of Jesus praying these inspired verses:

Verse 7: *I **thank** you from an upright heart, **schooled** in your rules of righteousness...*

a. The first quality that one must contemplate in Jesus and to ask God for in ourselves is that “uprightness of heart”. An “upright” heart is that quality of one who knows where he/she is going, and yet, has no hesitation in asking God for directions on which path to follow for the future. The Heart of Jesus is perfectly upright: it is totally committed to the service of the Father’s glory. He is totally convinced that this divine Glory is the happiness of humanity, and the salvation of

the world, even if He also understood that the only path to follow is the paradoxical way of the **kenosis** of humiliation.

b. Christ shares with us His own uprightness of heart, that rectitude in the orientation of thoughts, in **the total sacrifice of oneself** in behalf of the Father's Will. The believer does not forget that the fundamental, underlying mystery is the Father's Heart, this Merciful Father who does not cease in loving His wayward children, always desiring for us His ultimate good - eternal life in the bosom of the Trinity. Union with Christ enables one to share deeply in this upright will of God's love. When Jesus prays this Psalm, He is in total harmony with this Will and His only desire is to carry it out, by bringing it to realization in the lives of human beings. What is central to the divine "personality" of Jesus Christ is that He loves more than all else His Heavenly Father and the realization of His Will. This is what He always would like to see accomplished in them as it is in Himself, cost what it may. This makes Him quite free for the divine praises, since nothing in Jesus Christ is ever in the slightest opposition to the sacred Will of His Father.

c. The challenge of the believer is to enter into this "uprightness" of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It makes no sense to "contemplate" Jesus Christ if we do not decide to follow His path. Our own ways are so often chaotic and wayward, because they have not been unified under the direction of the Father's love. A good ejaculation in this sense would be the time-honored prayer offered by countless believers across the centuries, around the globe: **Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Yours!** Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not an end unto Itself. Its entire nature tends to have us communicate in the all holy will of the Heavenly Father. The more our own hearts become "upright", the more will we come to realize that life is less complicated than we may sometimes think. Every other person merits to be loved in him/herself, as children of God, redeemed by the son, being sanctified by the Spirit. The peace that comes to us through this devotion to the Sacred Heart needs to be shared.

d. *"I give thanks to God with all my heart ... the works of the Lord are sublime ... His righteousness can never change...all that He does is done in faithfulness and justice ... Quickly He comes to His people's rescue, imposing His Covenant once and for all ... the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, they have sound sense who practice it. His praises will be sung forever..."* [cf. Ps 111]

e. *"... My son, if you aspire to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for an ordeal. Be sincere of heart, be steadfast... cling to the Lord and do not leave Him...whatever happens to you, accept it, and in the uncertainties of your humble state, accept it. Since gold is tested in the fire, and the chosen in the furnace of humiliation. Trust Him and He will uphold you, follow a straight path and hope in Him. You, who fear the Lord, wait for His mercy; do not turn aside in case you fall.*

You, who fear the Lord, trust Him. You who fear the Lord hope for good things, for everlasting happiness and mercy...Whoever called out to Him and was ignored? For the Lord is compassionate and merciful, He forgives sins, and saves in days of distress...Those who fear the Lord do not disdain His words, and those who love Him keep His ways...Those who fear the Lord keep their hearts prepared and humble themselves in His presence...Let us fall into the hands of the Lord... for as His majesty, so, too, is His mercy... [cf. Si 2:1-17].

Verse 10: *I have sought You with all My Heart; do not let me stray from Your commandments.*

a. With what joy and authenticity could Jesus, the Father's Faithful Witness, offer this strophe of the Psalm! As the Eternal Son, He is totally turned toward the Father, fully receptive to His infinite love and rendering to Him a love as great. Now that He has become Man, He "learns" to pray with human words [learning the formulas, most likely, from His Mother!] this perfectly calm intrinsic tension of His entire filial being. And He uses this word from His own Heart, not merely describing the physical organ of His human body, but much more to express the ultimate depths that He has received in order to live this life.

b. The devotion of Christians to the Heart of Jesus Christ originates right here. We strive to approach with that simple word of "heart" **the depths of that bond which unites Jesus to His invisible Father**. For all the other cordial bonds of Jesus originate right here, in that eternal bond with His Father. Here is the secret of all of His human external expressions. Truly more than anyone else, Jesus is a Person **for** others, since He is perfectly obedient to His Father, His loving Servant. It does mean that each human being is loved for his/her basic "constitution" as a child of the Father. Jesus is able to recognize in the visage of each and every human being the image of the underlying love of the Heavenly Father.

c. This is why Jesus can say with this verse: *I have sought You with **all** My heart!* This seems to be the very core of humanity, striving for some real beatitude. It is proper to each human being, in the deepest core of one's being, to seek for God, to be established, grounded, based in and on Him. The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus can be of great assistance in communicating with the Heavenly Father. This devotion is not an end in itself, for this Heart is a prism which, thanks to the Holy Spirit, directs us to **the primordial absolute of the Love of the Father**. This does not mean that Jesus is solely Mediator, or that we would have no other interest in Him striving to ponder the depths of what He "is" as a divine Son. Jesus indeed is inseparably the Mediator between God and Man, and is consubstantial to the One Who sends Him. Whoever sees Him, sees the Father [cf. Jn 14:9] - the Father and Jesus are truly One [cf. Jn 10:38]. Every construction of Christianity, as the Revelation of Trinitarian Love, through the Redemptive Incarnation of the Word,

holds in the proper comprehension of these two phrases and their apparent antinomy.

d. The devotion to the Heart of Jesus Christ can lead us most profoundly into the depths of the faith in the Most Blessed Trinity and toward a deeper attachment to the Person of Christ in the Holy Spirit. One needs to realize that the Sacred Heart is a symbol of **the inner-Trinitarian mystery** where eternally the Son proceeds from the Father as His Word and the Spirit proceeds eternally as His love: the heart is the Icon of this inner reality. This “procession” is an act of Wisdom and love directed eternally toward the Plan of Redemption. The more the believer is led to contemplate, live this primordial love of the Father, the more will one also contemplate and venerate the Heart of Jesus Christ, the perfect Revealer of this love. The devotion to the Heart of Christ does center on the Incarnate Christ, but does not neglect for that reason in any stretch of the imagination, the love of the Father and the Personified love of the Holy Spirit. This devotion manifests the Heart of the Lord in its most profound truth, in its unconditional worship of the glory of the father, and this is why the Sacred Heart Devotion has such “natural” and profound bonds with the most Blessed Sacrament.

Verse 11: I have treasured Your promise in My Heart...

a. This “treasure” is like a “seal” - an indelible imprint. The human heart of Jesus Christ is structured in such a manner that His attachment to His heavenly Father “defines” it comprehensively. It is true that Jesus loved us all with a human heart [cf. GS 22] and He does this to the fullness of the sense that He is indeed a “Man for others.” However, the love of Jesus for humanity is always geared toward that which is the most profound in them, as sons and daughters invited to His eternal banquet of love. The ultimate purpose of all human beings is eternal, divine [cf. GS 22] This end is unique, in being final, since the absolute paternity of God is truly the heart and the origin of everything that exists in this world. The Incarnation of the Divine Son reveals the ultimate coherence of everything. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus manifests that this coherence can only be experienced in love.

b. Each human being, in the very depths of nature, bears this seal of the Father’s promise. There is an absolute certainty that this fact could serve as an anchor in the terrible storms of human life, through the most difficult stretches of time. The Exemplar here is always Jesus Himself: at the awful moment of His arrest, Jesus said to His disciples: ... *you will be scattered, each going his own way and leaving me alone. Yet, I am not alone because the Father is with Me...* [cf. Jn 16:32]. On the verge now of confronting the ultimate trial of solitude and abandonment by all, He is able to proclaim that the Father’s Love is His sole good, that wealth which can never be taken from Him. Even though in His darkest hour He would say: *My*

God, My God, why have You abandoned Me...? [cf. Mt 27:46, par.]. The poet, Charles Péguy, noted that Jesus died weeping over the death of Judas!

c. The attachment of Jesus Christ to His Father is like a seal imprinted on His human Heart and is capable of triumphing over any and all human cowardice and despair. The real tragedy of human beings is despair, which some would understand as that “sin against the Holy Spirit” [cf. Mt 12:32]. The union, in our name, of Jesus’ Heart to the Love of His Father is that which liberates us from any and all despair.

Verse 32: ... I run the way of Your commandments, since you have set Me free... [one translation of this is: You have ‘freed’ My heart.

a. The pathway of the Father’s love and the response to this love is infinitely vast. The more one strives to follow it along, the more does one feel as though he/she “belongs.” Should one wander from this way, the journey then soon become cluttered and hindered - Jesus says as much at the beginning of His teaching - gradually, the pilgrim believer feels more and more at his/her ease, and appreciates ever more the genuine freedom that God has infused into his/her heart. The saints are the freest of all, and Jesus Christ is the greatest of the saints.

b. Sometimes in speaking of the “obedience” of Jesus toward His Father, the impression might be given that there is some constraint, a certain subjection. Jesus is obedient to His Father in His perfect liberty that places in the Father all His love. The relationship of the Son to the Father is the ultimate perfection in spontaneity and in freedom. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus allows us to touch with our hand, as it were, this perfect and profound freedom of love: ... *I love the Father... I am doing exactly what the Father told Me. Come now, let us go...!* [cf. Jn 14:31]

c. In like manner, the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the world, and for all in it, is also vast, open to all, reaching out to each and every human heart. This must be understood in a particular way for sinners: those who stand in the most need, [hypothetically] have the “right” for the most Mercy. Since we are all sinners, this Devotion appeals to all for a hearing. We all ask often for the infinite mercy and pity of God which we all need. The Heart of Jesus “hopes” for no human rejection, refusal. The Heart itself rejects, refuses no one. The Sacred Heart is the human reflection of the infinite Mercy of the Heavenly Father. In his beautiful Encyclical, early in his Pontificate, Pope John Paul II has rendered a genuine ecclesial service in teaching that if there is any one human expression that might portray the Mystery of God it would have to be “Mercy” [cf. ***Dives in Misericordia***, November 30, 1980, 1st Sunday of Advent]. This infinite *largesse* of the Divine Heart is not prodigality without making any demands. It is a love of repeating us, even to accepting our

refusal - but, yet, it will continue to reach out, ever to renew its appeal. Such is the God who revealed through the mystery of the Heart of Jesus Christ.

Verse 36: ... *Turn My Heart to Your decrees...*

a. The Heart of Christ certainly is not humanly insensible. The Mystery is how could this Heart, hypostatically united to the Trinity, remain free, be tempted and yet be impeccable. Infinite Wisdom could grow in Wisdom and age [cf. Lk 2:40]. Thus, Jesus could never reject the Father, always freely choosing the supreme good. Yet, one of the strong appeals that the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus always has made is its “humanness.” The old adage of the Fathers of the Church is most true in this devotion: **grace builds on nature, but never destroys it.**

b. The Incarnation demands both the “respect” of God as well as the worship of humanity. From this point of view the Devotion to the Heart of Christ is the flower that blossoms from the most fitting conception of humanity. This God-Man, one could never be pondered exhaustively. Yet, to place the unattached, independent human person in the center of the universe, is illusory. And the opposite is true: to refuse to believe in the enormous good that each person can achieve in a lifetime, is to render injury to the Creator. The great Thomistic thesis is that **each human being is “naturally capable of God”**. It is unknown how many human beings fully realize their spiritual potential, that is inscribed as an “obediential potency” deepen within their human nature - which can be tapped all through life by the “First Cause”. Union with Christ enables one ever more fully to “realize his/her potential” in the development of each person’s natural capacity, desire” for God.

c. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus can help the believer to incline ever more his/her will to that of the Merciful Father and to comprehend that only here is our true good. To carry out, accept, all that God wills in our regard is the only sure path for our full “realization”, development. The Sacred Heart of Jesus shows us how we should incline our hearts to the merciful will of God, for His good and most especially, for ours - in this way, we indeed hallow His Name, carry out His will, bring about His reign [cf. The Lord’s Prayer].

d. Ep 6:1-9: *Work hard and willingly, but do it for the sake of the Lord and not for the sake of men. You can be sure that everyone, a slave or free, will be properly rewarded by the Lord for whatever work he has done well...*

Verse 58: ... *Wholeheartedly I now entreat You, take pity on Me as You have promised...*

a. The “Face” of God is a biblical insight pertaining to His Person, His love - the Little Flower was known as Sr. Therese of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face. It is a

great mystery in that we can speak of the Face of the Father as we also speak of the Heart of Christ.

b. In both images, there is the revelation of a profound/sublime intimacy, that paradoxically bridges an infinite distance. Both Heart and Face are depicted as being turned toward us, as eternally Jesus is turned toward His Heavenly Father, the ultimate object of His Love. The Heart of Jesus Christ is the Mirror of the Father's Face, and this Heart reflects His infinite Love and Mercy for us all. There is no divine "sabbatical", or the hint of any disinterest in the affairs of humanity - the hairs of our heads are counted and not even a swallow falls from the sky without the heavenly Father knowing about it [cf. Mt 10:30].

c. No matter how "poor" any human life may seem to be, in His eyes it is most precious. This is so for both the Father and the Son, because of the force of their bond of love which is the Holy Spirit, personified Love. He is most right to bring out the point that "whoever sees Him, sees the Father [cf. Jn 14:9]. However the Son does not change the Father, nor render Him something other than He is. He manifests all that He is from all eternity: His is a face of Love turned with tenderness towards all of His creation.

Verse 80: ... Blameless in your statutes be My heart...

a. The Heart of Jesus Christ can only be without reproach, and a formula like this one really has little application here. However, it has been formulated for us in that He is the Head of His Body, which is the Church. The devotion to the Heart of Christ should be educative, instructive for the understanding of our own hearts. Jesus teaches us through His heart, and shows us that His is one beyond any reproach, totally desirous of accomplishing the holy will of the Father. He is without reproach not only from the perspective of exterior observances - but also without reproach with regard to God Himself, Who alone sees the deepest and most interior part of one heart.

b. The devotion to the Heart of Christ aids us to comprehend that which matters above all, before God. It is true, of course, that actions are important, and Jesus makes quite clear: that it is not everyone who calls Him 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but rather those who do the will of His Father [cf. Mt 7:21]. Such as these are truly agreeable to him.

c. The NT brings out the teaching of the prophets regarding the contrite and humble of heart, which surpasses all sacrifices, because this indeed is the genuine **sacrifice of praise**. The devotion to the Heart of Christ teaches us simplicity and rectitude: for "odious are those whose hearts are divided!" [cf. Ps 119:113]. This is the great challenge of spiritual psychology: that the requests of the believer be unified and simplified without losing one's way on the passing over to the Lord, or

being lost in concerns of little importance. We need to watch and to be sure that our devotion to the Heart of Christ might have this rectitude, in what is essential. As one devotion among others, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart out to be THE devotion to the mystery of the infinite love of God.

Verse 145: ... *Sincere My call - Lord, answer Me!*

a. Faith invite us into the unfathomable mystery of **the prayer of the Divine Son to His own Father**. It is one matter to think of Jesus as committed to prayer in that He shared our human condition, on the way to the Father. But, He likewise enjoyed the unique eternal relationship of the Word to His Father - which, by a real analogy, might be called “**eternal prayer**.” This relationship of loving exchange between the Son and the Father is eternal and we are definitively present since Christ is always living in order to make intercession for us [cf. Heb 7:25]. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church and of the world, and He takes upon Himself all the distress in order to present a confident invocation to the Father. This is the position of Mediator which the Father has willed for Him through His love.

b. The Devotion to the Heart of Jesus would remain on the level of a pure formal contemplation if it were not made to be a part of the intercession of Jesus Himself in behalf of His Creation. Furthermore, it is necessary to keep in mind that the Christ is totally enflamed with the glory of the Father, nor should it be neglected that He loves each and every creature with an authentic personal love. This is the divine Heart that has so loved human beings.

c. Jn 12:44-50: *Whoever believes in Me, believes not in Me, but in the One Who sent Me, and whoever sees Me sees the One Who sent Me...I have not come to condemn the world, but to save the world...what I have spoken does not come of Myself; no, what I was to say, what I had to speak, was commanded by the Father Who sent Me, and I know His commands mean eternal life. And therefore, what the Father has told Me is what I speak...*

d. Jn 14:1-21: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still and trust in Me...I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me so that where I am, you may be, too. You know the way to the place where I am going...I am the way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me. If you know Me, you know My Father, too. ... To have seen Me is to have seen the father ...You must believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the father is in Me...I tell you most solemnly: whoever believes in Me, will perform the same works as I do Myself, He will perform even greater works...I will not leave you orphans...*

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A. A Rapid Survey

Biblical Foundations³

Presentation:

[1] This Devotion presents us with a God Whose Heart has been pierced - one of the signs of our times is the deep need people feel for “self-help” for inner, spiritual well being, peace, meaning in life. There is a quest for spiritual sources that sometimes assumes extraordinary levels: the world-wide quest for gurus, even in far away, exotic places. There is before us in the Christian tradition the sublime teaching of the “divinization/participation” in the very life of the Trinity - this spirit of “deification”, properly understood, can be learned in the School of Jesus Christ.

[2] The Church was born in the Fire of Pentecost - in the Pierced Side on Good Friday afternoon - in the Eucharistic Cenacle room on Holy Thursday night - in the womb of Mary in the annunciation - in the preaching of the prophets of old, inseminating the seed of God’s Word. Thus the marvelous promise echoes down over the centuries of Christian faith: *... you will draw waters joyfully from the streams of salvation...* [cf. Is 12:3] - *... let all who are thirsty come: all who want it may have the water of life, and have it free...* [cf. Rv 22:17]

[3] These are almost the final lines of Sacred Scripture, as we have it. In order that human beings come to know their own hearts, it is necessary to discover the source of the living font, that which flowed in such abundance from the Pierced Side of Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary, and which has never ceased to irrigate the Church ever since. These streams of new life flow from the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

[4] It was long wondered whether the Devotion to the Sacred Heart finds solid support in God’s Word. It is necessary to remember that the Church cannot teach or promote any doctrine unless this finds support in Sacred Scripture. Some have “written off” the Sacred Heart Devotion as being a posterior addition, brought about by a questionable piety. This “write-off” seems simply to misunderstand the many elements regarding the Love of God that can be found on nearly every page of God’s Word. .

[4] The revelation of the Love of God is expressed in this Devotion, and the frequent references to the heart as the seat, the symbol and the root of this love. The Heart of Jesus: this means the very love of the Son of God, Man and God, sent by the Father, in the Holy Spirit. The Heart is the living sign of the One who offers Himself for the liberation of all and Who wishes to establish with each human being a personal and intimate relationship In the language of Scripture, as in current

³cf. Paul de Meester, *Redécouvrir le Sacré Coeur*, Paris: Mediaspaul 1996, pp. 12-29, passim.

language, the word “heart” is a term whose evocative power is extremely manifest. The interior mystery of each human being is expressed in biblical language, and extra-biblical language, by the word “heart.”

1. The Rooting of the Devotion of the Divine Heart in the OT: there are at least two series of texts that might be pondered here:

- one of these describes the infinite and merciful love of the Creator for the human race;
- a second series depicts with some precision the human heart of the Messiah.

Together, these passages announce the supreme sign of God’s love for humanity in the most Holly and adorable Heart of Jesus Christ.

a. The Dimension of the Heart of the Creator God: the entire OT can be looked upon as a gradual unfolding - with valleys and peaks - of the divine tenderness which has chosen a lowly People, liberated it, sanctified by purifying it. This people, then, at various junctures of its history, abandoned its God, its sole Benefactor, the One Who had delivered them all from the Land of Slavery and from wandering aimlessly, endlessly in the desert, only to fall periodically into idolatry. The result was their oppression once more by higher civil powers. The Lord repeatedly sent His redeemers to bring the People back.

1.] Hoseah: in moving terms, reflecting on his own unhappy marriage, the prophet presents God as the jilted Husband Who would do anything to win His beloved back to Himself. Very openly, the saddened husband expresses His thoughts: I will seduce her, speak to the heart of His People. They will no longer call the Lord their Master, but rather, their Spouse. The Lord promises to bear her up in justice and right, in tenderness, and they will come to know their Lord once more [cf. Ho 2:16, 22]. With still another family image, that of parent, the Lord reminds His wayward People of the fact that He has loved them from their difficult birth, and how He Himself had taught them how to walk, supporting them in His own arms and how He had bent down over this infant People to give them nourishment, and how He had lifted them in infinite tenderness against His cheek. Yet, the People still refused to come to Him. Yet, His Divine Heart recoils at rejecting this People, His whole being trembles at the thought. He will not give reign to His justified anger for He is God and not a human being [cf. Ho 11:8, f.]

2.] Jeremiah: is inspired by the Lord to write His promises: that it will be the divine pleasure to bring about the good of His People, planting them firmly in the land, which He will do with all His heart and soul [cf. Jr 32:41].

3.] Song of Songs: this entire composition expresses the divine love as that of an ardent Suitor for His beloved people. Freud would see this book as simply the sublimation of humanity. Yet, this is the work of the Holy Spirit of God, speaking of the natural yearning of human beings for union with God. This is the divine love that is being described in striking human language. The mystics would much develop this imagery

4.] Ezechiel: makes known the divine decision to purify His People and to implant deep within them a new heart and spirit: the Lord Himself will pour over them a pure water, and the People will be purified. They will receive a new heart, and He will place within them His own holy Spirit. He will remove their hearts of stone, and give to them in its place, a heart of flesh. He will place in his People His own heart, and then from this interior inspiration, they will follow His Laws, keep His commandments and be faithful to Him [cf. EZk 36:25, ff.]

Summary: The OT, then, not only presents to us the revelation of a loving God, remaining totally spiritual and transcendent. Rather, the Word of God gradually unfolds before the eyes and heart of the reader the Lord's Messiah. The Lord will ask of this messiah, a Suffering Servant [cf. Is 53], to hand over His heart to suffering and death in order to make of this an inexhaustible font from which believers until the end of time might draw the waters of salvation joyfully [cf. Is 12:3].

b. The Crushed and Broken Heart of the Promised Messiah: this Promised Redeemer will be sent to the sinful People, to remove them over and over again from their captivity and slavery of all kinds. He will be endowed with a humble heart, that will be crushed and bruised for our iniquities.

1.] Ps 22: presents to the believer the prayer that Jesus Himself offered on the Cross. The unknown author offers a deep description of his agony: My Heart is like wax, melting inside Me [cf. v. 14]. This melting heart will prove to be infinitely humble, patient and merciful. Around the year 150, St. Justin would comment that these sentiments regarding the heart melting inside the Messiah are a prophecy of Jesus Christ that He would endure on that terrible night when He was taken prisoner in Gethsemane. In fact, the Apostle Luke makes known to us that He sweat blood [cf. Lk 22:44], and His heart and whole being trembled. All this was also to make known that the Father had willed that His Son would undergo all this for the sake of humanity and that as Son of God, one indivisible Person, He suffered all this.

2.] Ps 69: offers further nuances of the suffering of the Messianic Heart: ... *You know the insults that I endure...the insults have broken My heart... I*

had hoped for sympathy, but in vain, I found no one to console Me [cf. vv. 19, ff.]. This plaintive cry manifests the profound truth, both sorrowful and terrible: the Heart of the Messiah is abandoned to His solitary distress. His Heart is broken in awesome anguish. Yet, as the verses proceed, there is a Canticle of hope: ... *wounded wretch that I am, by Your saving power, God, lift Me up. I will praise the name of the Lord with song... seeing this, the humble can rejoice: long life to your heart who seek God!* [vv. 29, ff.]. The Heart of the Messiah will be crushed, desolate, but will thereby bring to humanity afflicted with sin, strength to go on, and consolation to persevere.

3.] Ps 16: joyfully completes this image of the Heart of the Messiah: His heart exults, His soul rejoices, His body too, will rest securely, for You will not abandon Him to Sheol [cf. vv. 9, ff. - an OT hint of the resurrection?] This is the Canticle of joy of that Messianic Heart delivered from all suffering.

Summary

[1] The mysterious words found in these Psalms 16; 22; and 69 offer an extraordinary anticipated view into the Heart of the Coming Messiah and His most intimate human sentiments of mind and heart. These expressions make use of the most rich and sublime words, dear to the Holy Spirit, especially the word “heart.” The Heart of the Messiah - both human and divine - is totally submitted to God Who sends Him [cf. Ps 39]. He offers His total Self in humility, He struggles deep within in a mortal anguish [cf. Pss 22 & 69] and yet, burst forth in a Canticle of sublime joy [cf. Ps 16] This pathway of His heart is authentically human and is totally committed to the service of His Messianic Mission. He wishes to reach out in accomplishing His total sacrifice of Himself, to those whom He has redeemed, and wants to share with them all the Living waters of the Holy Spirit. This Blood and water, the Heart and the Spirit, death and life, are all indissolubly united in the Christology of the Old Covenant.

[2] Thus, the OT shows us not only in a metaphorical manner the Heart of God - by the abundant use of brilliant “anthropopathisms” - as having the ardent love of a Husband, a Friend, a Father, and even a Mother [cf. Is 49:4-15, Ps 131]. But, perhaps the image above all these others might be that the Heart of the Messiah melts with love for His wayward, weak but beloved Spouse. His heart is full of love and the Wisdom of God [cf. Jb 9:4]. the Lord’s Heart is wise and His strength is great!

2. The Revelation of the Heart of Jesus in the NT: it is true that the NT does not explicitly inculcate devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as presented to the Church in later centuries. Yet, it does develop the ideal of the Messiah’s Heart as the symbol of love. On the other hand, there are easily traceable in the NT a number of passages that lend themselves readily which together, more than “legitimize” and

found this devotion. In certain passages, Jesus does reveal the deepest sentiments of His own heart and the Spirit whom He promises to those who will believe in Him. Furthermore, for centuries the Church has pondered an eloquent sign in the open side of Christ on Calvary, carefully preserved and pointed out to the Apostles after the resurrection.

a. A Meek and Humble Heart, Source of the Spirit:

1.] At practically each and every step that Jesus took in His recorded life in Palestine, His discourses, parables and miracles all reveal to us His heart, full of tenderness and pity. How many times the crowd and those who accompanied Him have noted that the mere sight of a sick person, one possessed, or one who had already died, or one with any misery whatever, as the hungry crowd, and Jesus would feel this deeply, or that He would be overtaken with pity [cf. Lk 7:13]. The parables of the Prodigal Son, the sheep that got lost, as the episode of the sinful woman, whose name has not even been remembered, all of these happenings proclaim to us that there was in Him a heart that was patient and merciful, liberal towards anyone who would invoke Him, as the source of life and holiness.

2.] There are two texts that speak expressly of His Heart:

- Mt 11:25-30: *...At that time, Jesus exclaimed: 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and clever, and revealing them to mere children, Yes, Father, for this is what it pleased You to do. Everything has been entrusted to Me by My Father; and no one knows the son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. 'Come to Me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder My yoke and learn from Me, for **I am gentle and humble in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, My yoke is easy and My burden is light....*

This is the Hymn of Jubilation which invites us to come to Him, because He is **meek and humble of heart**. The construction shows clearly that the evangelist is not limiting himself merely to the physical organ of Christ's Heart, but considers more the Person, "I", and that this is a matter of revelation. In contrast with other Doctors of the Law Jesus Christ presents Himself as Master Who is meek and humble and speaks of a yoke and a burden in quite different terms. The sweetness of Christ evident in His teaching comes from the fact that this doctrine is centered around the love of a contact person. There is the invitation to find repose in the Heart of Jesus Christ. Charity renders all burdens lighter. Where one finds love, the burden is not so great, as St. Augustine would say: where there is love, there is no burden - and if one does have to work, it is indeed a labor of love. It is a matter of learning that Jesus Christ indeed is sweet and humble of heart. A condition does arise: it is only by humility that one can penetrate into the secret of this heart.

- Jn 7:37-38: ... *On the last and greatest day of the Festival [of Tents], Jesus stood there and cried out: If any man is thirsty, let him come to me. If any man come and drink, who believes in Me. As Scripture says: **From His breast shall flow fountains of living water...***

With the most ancient of traditions, the proclamation here seems to be that the “side” of Jesus here refers to His “heart”. This will be the source of the Living Water for those who are thirsty and who would believe in him. Without any doubt, Jesus Christ is referring to the Prophecies of Ezechiel [47:1-12] and Zechariah [14:8] in order to invite His listeners to come and drink the Living water from His words, of His will, and of His salvific love, which flow forth from the depths of His Person. He promise to believers and to the whole Church, that if they do come - like the contemporaries to whom this word is immediately directed - that this Spirit Who had not yet been given, does reside fully in Himself. Jesus begins to unfold the intention of His heart: *He was speaking of the Spirit which those who had believed in Him were to receive for there was no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified...* [v. 39].

b. The Sign of the Pierced and Transfigured Heart [cf. Jn 19:33-37]: in addition to these two passages concerning the Mission of His Heart, the Lord chose to offer a sensible sign of His love: His heart would be pierced and then transfigured. This is to be noted in the final section of the 4th Gospel, where the Beloved Disciple reclined on the breast of the Savior at the Last Supper [cf. Jn 13:23-26]. In the commentary of St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John wanted to plunge his own heart into this source of life as a sponge dipped into the water. This is a profound revelation of the mystery of the Divine Heart. The special passage noted above [Jn 19:33-37] takes place right after the account that Jesus bowed His head, gave up His Spirit. The text has three segments:

1.] The Historic Account of the `thrust of the Lance [Jn 19:33-34]: ... *when they came to Jesus, they found He was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance and immediately there came out blood and water...*

Most interpreters are struck here with the juridical realism of these verses, as well as their rather dry and unflappable style. These are soldiers who are simply and coldly carrying out someone else’s order. However, according to his custom, the evangelist has charged this passage with a multiple symbolism for the spiritual reading. The blow of the lance imprints on the body of Jesus Christ the accomplishment of certain figures: much like an arrow, or directional signal, the lance indicates the direction toward which the reader should concentrate in allowing themselves to be drawn by the play on the senses which follow this ultimate image with such care. And Paul Claudel will points out in a marvelous

manner: the centurion's lance went beyond the Body of Christ, and opens up for us the entire mystery of the Trinity.

St. Augustine had remarked centuries earlier that the Evangelist had made use of an expression that he chose by design. He does not say; he "struck", or he "wounded" His side; but rather, he "opened" His side, in order to have us understand that he had also opened up for us the gateway unto everlasting life. From this open side of the dead Jesus, there flowed the sacraments of Initiation into the Church, without which one cannot really have access to the authentic life.

These images were also manifestations of the Spirit with all of His seven Gifts which flowed forth from Him. And these poured forth "immediately". If Jesus had exclaimed that He had experienced abandonment from His Father, upon dying, He immediately allowed His graces to pour forth in such abundance. This allowed the Church to understand, so to speak, the immediate and efficacious fecundity of Jesus' death: His Pierced Heart became the symbolic short-cut to the Paschal Mystery.

We note finally that the text does not say that there flowed forth from His pierced side "water and blood" [for this, cf. I Jn 5:6], but blood and water. The order seems intentional here: the sacrificial expiation in the Blood logically precedes the spiritual coming to new life in the gift of the Spirit, symbolized here by water.

This Pierced Heart of Jesus Christ signifies in a visible and expressive manner the redemptive fecundity of the death of Jesus Christ and the extreme dimension of His love. It bears inscribed upon it simultaneously a symbol of the death [the horrendous wound], and a symbol of life, in the blood and water - for the Semitic mind, this means vitality and fecundity. The Heart was wounded after Jesus' physical death and the signs of life began flowing even prior to His Resurrection. John's account in c. 19 seems to have liturgical, cultic overtones, and the wound in death ought to be considered as the last incision celebrated in the Liturgy of the Immolated Lamb, the bones of which would not be broken. This out-pouring of the blood and water appear as a pre-libation of the future fuller gift of the Holy Spirit, which would be given when Jesus would be glorified. The Evangelist thus chose to make more impressive in this scene of the Pierced Heart the theological truth of the fecundity of the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Better than anything else could, this expresses the central message of Christianity and this is the key that opens up the reading the rest of Scripture.

2.] The Testimony of an Eye-Witness [v. 35]: *... This is the evidence of one who saw it - trustworthy evidence, and he knows he speaks the truth - and he gives it so that you may believe as well...*

The unique importance of this passage is then indeed clearly marked by the solemn declaration of the Eye-Witness, who does not hesitate to break the narrative

tissue of the total context in order to involve rather abruptly and personally the community. The Testimony of the most beloved Disciple certifies the direct knowledge of the event of which he speaks, and he assures that this is in full harmony with the truth - as he will do again, as the conclusion to his gospel: ... *this disciple is the one who vouches for these things and has written them down, and we know that his testimony is true...* [cf. Jn 21:24]. He draws out the profound meaning of all this, and calls to mind his overall purpose in writing: so that you, too, might believe. None of the preceding signs of Christ, no teaching in the same Gospel, is accompanied by a parallel solemnity, nor put down with such force as these few lines. This last sign is like the culmination and the synthesis of all the others. This is meant to confirm all the rest. The piercing of the Heart of Christ is truly the culminating point of the Johannine message.

3.] The Calling to Mind of the Fulfillment of Two Prophecies [vv. 36-37]: ... *Because all of this happened to fulfill the words of Scripture: 'not one of his bones will be broken, and again, in another place scripture says: 'they will look on the one they have pierced.'*

The value of the historical veracity will be confirmed by the presentation of these two prophecies: that not one of His bones would be broken [cf. Nb 21:9] and they will look on the one they have pierced [cf. Zc 12:10]. This last prophecy, regarding "the Pierced One" will become the point of departure of a contemplation and a deeper fathoming of the mystery by the generations that will follow, all through the time of the Fathers of the Church, down through the Doctors/Doctoresses of the Church. This is a perspective of unfathomable riches, particularly in that there is brought out dramatically the love of the Pierced Heart of Jesus Christ. These points need to be pondered:

- the Evangelist announces the 'look' of the Church on the Pierced One through the centuries: Just as the Hebrews of the desert generation were healed from the sting of the serpents by their contemplation of the Bronze Serpent raised up by Moses for them to see, in like manner, all human beings who will take the time to contemplate the One Who, being raised up on the Cross, and had His Heart pierced, and will believe in him, they will be saved and will receive eternal life [cf. Jn 3:14,f.]. When I will be raised up from the earth [on the Cross and in the Resurrection, I will **draw** all to myself [cf. Jn 12:32]. For John, Cardinal Ratzinger notes, the image of the Pierced Heart is the moment, the supreme Hour - not only of the scene of the Crucifixion, but of Jesus' entire history. It is right now, after the thrust of the lance, that His entire existence as Man and God is opened up to the contemplative gaze of believers. It is at this moment that He shows Himself to be entirely "for" others. It is now that He is not merely some isolated condemned person, but this is Adam, from whose side is drawn the second Eve, a New Humanity, a New Creation.

And when Jesus, after His death and three days in the tomb, following His Resurrection, He appeared to His Apostles, He showed them the open wound in His side. This would almost seemed to have been an insupportable mark on the integrity and to the dignity of His glorious Body. However, this is but another manner of emphasizing the continuity between the Jesus Who had suffered, and the One who, having been exalted, remains forever with them. The **Sacred Stigmata** brought out the identity between the Pierced Heart and the Transfigured Heart.

Three separate times the Evangelist mentions this eloquent gesture. The first time it was to all the disciples, gathered together the very evening of the Resurrection: and He showed them His hands and His side [cf. Jn 20:20]. The same day, later on, we understand Thomas offering his defiance: unless I place my hand in His side, I will not believe [v. 25]. While anyone might be indignant at the demands that Thomas lays down, one is also amazed by the insistence that Jesus Himself gives to respond to this request: place your finger here and put your hand into My side [v. 27]. Jesus is inviting His doubting Apostle to seek, search, discover for Himself that these are really wounds and that the Sacred Stigmata retained in the glorious Body identify Him as the Crucified Lord. The Apostle is invited to place his hand in the terrible wound in the side, now all glorious in the resurrection. Throughout the long centuries mystics and monks have long desired to enter ever more deeply into this mystery: "As for me, look for me hidden in the wounds of Jesus Christ!" [St. Gaspar Bertoni, Stigmatine Founder].

Once Thomas had conducted his "thorough examination" of the evidence, he is rewarded with becoming the first Confessor of the Resurrection: My Lord and my God [v. 28], he proclaimed. This public Profession of total Faith constitutes the summit of the Gospel of the Resurrection. This is complemented by the Beatitude regarding the believers of the centuries ahead: blessed is anyone who has believed and NOT seen! The unveiled manifestation of the Heart of the Risen Lord will lead all to the Glory of the Risen Lord. This sacred Heart, then, proves to be the great sign in history of the conquering and infinitely merciful love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

c. A Personal Love, one that is without Limits and is Creative:

These hints, which have long been related to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the piety of the Church, do not express any particular mystery from the life of Jesus Christ but form the central hearth which animates all the particular mysteries, from the events on Calvary and in the Cenacle room, to our own time. In effect, all the words, all the works of Jesus, have been inspired by His loving, merciful Heart: the Incarnation, the Hidden Life, the Public Life, His teachings and miracles, His Paschal Mystery: Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, the

sending of the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Sacraments, the Mother of the Redeemer, the Saints - all are manifestations, expressions of His infinite Love and Mercy.

As a result, the Sacred Heart of Jesus has long been seen as synthesizing the profound depths of the riches of His Merciful Love, expressing in a visible manner above all, the Personal Will of God, that is one of love, mercy without measure in its endless creativity.

- a personal love: He has said to us: it is not you who have chosen Me, but I have chosen you and called you so that you might bear fruit [cf. Jn 15:16]. I do not call you servants, but My friends [cf. Jn 15:15]. And Paul will add: He has loved me, and given Himself over for me [cf. Ga 2:20];

- a love without limit, or exclusion: He has loved his own even to the end [cf. Jn 13:1] - No one has any greater love than He Who gives up His life for those whom he loves [cf. Jn 15:13]. And Paul again adds: The Father has given us His own Son, and has given all with Him [cf. Rm 8:32].

- a Love of Pardon and Creativity: He pardoned the sinful Samaritan with her five husbands, and made of her **a missionary of His merciful message** [cf. Jn 4:29]. Peter, His Apostle of choice, would deny Him three separate times: as Peter cursed and swore, a cock crowed and the Lord looked at Peter [cf. Lk 22:61]. Peter's entire life was changed by the Lord's looking upon him. Peter had been one of those the Lord had chosen, and the one to be the head of the Apostles - now Peter becomes the one whom the Lord pardoned and called to conversion of heart, and He created in His "Vicar" a new heart. John would exclaim: If our heart condemns us, God is still greater than our hearts [cf. 1 Jn 3:20].

- a Love that is always actual: this Loving mercy is perpetuated in Reconciliation and the Eucharist in a particular manner. Remain in Me, the Master pleaded, **just as** He remains in us [cf. Jn 15:4] If we do love Him, we will keep His Word, and His Father will love us the more -and the Most Holy Trinity will come and make of us Their dwelling place [cf. Jn 14:23]. The Mystery of the Divine Heart, as the Word of God unveils this for us, is a picture of a Heart all on fire, manifesting itself especially in the Paschal Mystery, as supreme love. This is insane" love as some of the mystics would say, absolutely "reckless". It comes to us daily in the Eucharist, as a permanent love, in the Mystery of the Church, as a visible and living love. The NT reveals and leads believers toward the physical Heart of Christ - as the principal object of its attention as the expression of the amiable and loving Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity.

3. **The Pierced One:** they will look on the One they have pierced! [cf. Jn 19:37]⁴.

Premise:

[1] For St. John, the full weight of the verb he chose: **they will look on** the One they have pierced, and the contemplative attitude behind this, are essential. He himself is an eye-witness - he relates to us what he has looked on, listened to, touched [cf. 1 Jn 1:1, ff.]. He is inviting the Church of the centuries to join him in this vision.

[2] Yet, and more importantly, the words of Jesus must never be neglected; **Blessed are they who believe without having seen!** [Jn 20:29] This is the contemplative coming to the faith, more through hearing - the view not so much of the eyes, but the penetrating gaze of the contemplation of His words. It is necessary for each believer to ponder Jesus Christ for a long time and with passion. Profound, contemplative prayer is that interior regard, desirous of knowing in depth, every more intimately, the Risen Lord presented to us in faith.

[3] No one can enter straightaway to a profound knowledge of God, not can anyone enter into intimacy with the sublimity of the most wonderful secrets of the merciful love of Jesus Christ. As happened to Him on that painful journey from Golgotha towards Jerusalem, there were many passers-by, even those who might have referred to Him as 'Lord, Lord!' - went right on by without ever genuinely fathoming the mystery. They remain in the darkness of that Sabbath night. The vocation of the Church is to "watch and pray", to struggle to find the light in the darkness of the night: the Nativity, Gethsemane, the Resurrection - for a glimpse of the New Dawn - like watch-men waiting for the dawn [Ps 130 - waiting to grasp this great High Priest, born on the distant mountains before the first streaks of dawn. Elizabeth of the Trinity prayed that in prayer she might look toward the Lord in a manner totally awakened in faith.

[4] In striving to fathom this sublime mystery, the committed believer is enormously helped when he/she is able to see the Pierced Heart in those among us who are suffering. On another road, from Jerusalem to Jericho, many passed by without so much as even noticing the poor man, who had fallen among robbers, and was left for dead along the side. For those with the vision of faith - much like a person accustomed to familiar surroundings in dim light, is able to see details that the untrained eye would miss - or, like the artist looking out at nature. This is similar to the person of prayer before the Pierced Heart of the Savior: little by little the Sacred Heart makes more of an impression on the contemplative reflection, and the prayerful believer allows him/herself to be taken over by the Pierced One upon

⁴cf. Philippe FERLAY, *Coeur du Christ, Mystère de Dieu*. Paris: Mediaspaul 1995, pp. 81-94, passim.

whom one “looks”. Authentic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus depends very much on this on-going efforts at contemplation.

[5] An essential ingredient of Devotion to the Sacred Heart is to “look upon” the Pierced One with a contrite heart, all desirous of conversion. Those whose prayerful insights have encouraged this Devotion in the Church insist much on this meditation on one’s own sinfulness - a stance already noted in the NT and preached through the early centuries by the Fathers of the Church. This Pierced Heart, so full of love for the sinners of all times, and of those most in need, invites one to serious contrition, and authentic regret for our own faults. It is before Him that the believer comes to appreciate “first-hand” what genuine contrition really is. Perfect contrition is far beyond the ordinary - and in truth, may be reserved to privileged souls who correspond to their own prayer and the spirit of the Liturgy: contrition but always with hope in the infinite Mercy of God. As Jesus reminds us: Whoever sees Me, sees the whole Trinity: in the Sacred Heart, one can come into contact with the sincerity and infinity of the Father’s Mercy, the healing and sanctifying power of the Love of the Holy Spirit. The Pierced Side of Jesus is a Window into the Trinity, and serves as a Mirror for Christians.

[6] Contrition is not the painful, wounded sense of shame, the cry of the proud person who regrets not being ‘good’ enough, whose faults are not hidden enough. There is a profound depth in the prayer of Peter: Depart from me, o Lord, for I am a sinful man! [cf. Lk 5:8] - Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! [cf. Lk 18:39]. Or, the prayer of the publican: God, be merciful to me, a sinner! [cf. Lk 18:13]. Anticipated purgatory is more a state of mind and heart rather than a place. The prophets and the psalms centuries before Christ spoke of the crushed and bruised heart of the Messiah. They understood the love of God much like that of that of a totally caring Mother [cf. Ps 131]. Thus, Jesus teaches by His words - and also by His deeds. Allowing His Side to be opened, this then becomes the source of the streams of Salvation [cf. Is 12:3; Jn 7].

[7] The contemplative gaze on the Pierced One can transform the committed believer. There is a popular prayer that has been offered for generations:

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Yours!

Far beyond the familiar melody, there is here a profound theological pertinence. The ideal presented here is to contemplate Jesus Christ, bit by bit, in order to be transformed into Him, to put on His mind. Paul sets the ideal with his “Christological Mysticism”: It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me [cf. Ga 2:20]. The Christian ideal through the centuries is to be transformed into Jesus Christ and to be from now on, one with Him, so that what is His will become more and more ours, and what we are will be more and more what He is. Our hearts need to be given

over to His, so that there will be one Heart, one will between us. And this is why there will always be a strong bond between the theology of the Heart of Christ and that of the Eucharistic action. The well known principle of St. Augustine applies here: that in the Eucharist we might eventually become What we receive. The Eucharistic communion proceeds in the same sense that the devotion to the Heart of Christ: to allow oneself to be taken over by a divine power, that is very really human. The Son has not become man to simply give us an example - although He is the supreme Paradigm in the spiritual journey. Rather, by the fire of the Holy Spirit He enkindles the brambles of our hearts and renders them less unworthy of the Father's merciful love.

[8] Ph 2:1-11: ... *be united in your convictions and your love, with a common purpose and a common mind...let everybody be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody think of his own interests first, but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead.*

In your minds, you must be the same as Christ Jesus:

... He did not cling to His equality with God...

... He emptied Himself, to assume the condition of a slave...

... even to accepting death, death on a cross...

... but the Father raised Him up and gave Him the name above all names...all beings, in the heavens, on earth, and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus, and that every tongue should acclaim: Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father...

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a. He breathed on them [cf. Jn 20:19, ff.] *...Jesus came in and stood among them. He said to them: 'Peace be with you,' and showed them His hands and His side...'As the Father sent Me, so am I sending you.' After saying this He breathed on them, and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained...'*

a. The reader needs to remember that the purpose of this reflection is to present the Trinitarian dimension of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Thus it is already rather clear that the Heart is that of Christ, reflecting the merciful love of the Father. Here there is a golden opportunity to ponder somewhat the impetus of the Holy Spirit in this devotion [cf. Jn 20:22].

1.] Jn 20 presents to the Church the Johannine Pentecost - with a view as well to the theophany found in Luke regarding the Pentecost taking place 50

days after the Resurrection. The sudden appearance of the Blood and Water flowing out of the Pierced Side of Christ was already an initial Pentecost. The images and the mysteries interpenetrate and are not in any opposition, provided that one does understand at what point it is necessary for the Spirit to come forth and to infuse Himself over the world and to fulfill the promises of Jesus: it is good that I go, in order for the Spirit to come.

2.] The Risen Jesus breathes upon His disciples, and with that, the Power of Life which unites Him eternally to the Father. The Pentecost is a New Creation, a work of the Lord completed in the Holy Spirit. The Third Person of the Trinity at the beginning “hovered” over the waters [cf. Gn 1:2]. When the world will be renewed by the Mystery of the Pasch, the Spirit is there, Who assures the growth of all things. This New Creation annuls nothing of the first creation, but fulfills it, accomplishes it, wondrously. Whoever we may be, we exist in the Spirit, i.e. to say, in a participation in the Trinitarian life. The Gift of the Spirit, on Easter night, marks a new step forward in the realization of a work foreseen by the Father before the centuries and is realized in the course of time with a pedagogy motivated y love.

3.] Nothing more important could exist in the history of the world than the sending out of this Spirit. It is with a view to the Holy Spirit that the Word has become man. He suffered His Passion in order to renew the Covenant and to gather all the children of God, spread everywhere, bringing them together under the arms of the Cross. He has risen in order to pour forth into all human flesh His Holy Spirit of eternal love. As Irenaeus had so well presented, the Father’s Plan, is to “re-capitulate” all things in Jesus Christ, this work which the Spirit accomplishes in the last times. In the Church which lives of Him without ever becoming all, nor becoming His proprietor, the Holy Spirit is the Guardian of His Word and the Master of His works in and through all the Sacraments. Without being able to speak of an Age of the Spirit which would succeed that of the divine Son, it would be necessary to retain how Pentecost accomplishes the Father’s Plan to the point that at the end, the Son Himself submits to the One who has submitted all to Himself, so that God might be all in all. One might then think that the Holy Spirit has been given to the world as the Father of the Poor, inaugurating the reciprocity of human persons in a charity without detour, in the image of the perfect simplicity of the Persons in God.

4.] It is right here that we rediscover the Mystery of the Heart of Jesus Christ. It is the living sign of the total poverty of God. This is not, of course, a poverty of lacking anything, but rather one that is motivated by an excess of love which moves God not to cling to any Self-sufficiency, but rather that inspires Him freely to give of Himself without reserve. We do not know how to harmonize this gift without reserve with the infinite richness of His creating from which all of life proceeds. The Son with His Pierced Heart, the Giver of the Holy Spirit, is inseparably

the humble mendicant of our love and the one which fills us beyond all measure. If the One who was rich has made Himself poor in order to enrich us through His poverty [cf. 2 Co 8:9], this is all in order to show that the true richness is not that which one possesses, but what it is that one gives.

5.] The work of the Triune God is of a perfect coherence, since the creative act, without in any way impoverishing God, enables us to live in His grace, without our own importance and personal dignity. This is brought about through the mediation of the Son become man in order to share in the riches and the limits of our human existence. This is all geared to this Pentecost which gives meaning to all that is, and is the ultimate victory of the divine generosity over all selfishness. All we have to do is to allow ourselves to be led wherever God chooses, in a daily gift to the Father and to our brothers and sisters, without too much emphasis on our own selves, since self-absorption is never for us, nor even for God, the pathway to fulfillment, happiness.

6.] Titus 3:3-7: *... we lived in wickedness and ill-will, hating each other and hateful ourselves. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior for mankind were revealed it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own compassion that He saved us by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which He has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Savior. He did this so that we would be justified by His grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life...*

7.] 2 Tm 1:6-14: *...That is why I am reminding you to fan into flame the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you. God's gift was not a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power and love and self-control. so you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to the Lord, or ashamed of me for being his prisoner; but with me, bear the hardships for the sake of the Good News relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy - not because of anything we ourselves have done but for his own purpose and by his own grace. This grace has already been granted to us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time, but it has only been granted to us by the Appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus. He abolished death, and he has proclaimed life and immortality through the Good News; and I have been named its herald, its apostle and teacher. It is only because of this that I am experiencing fresh hardships here now; but I have not lost confidence, because I know who it is that I have put my trust in, and I have no doubt at all that he is able to take care of all that I have entrusted to him until that Day. Keep as your pattern the sound teaching you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. You have been trusted to look after something precious; guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us...*

b. My Lord and my God [cf. Jn 20:28, f.]:

1.] The text does not really say whether Thomas did indeed place his hand in the open side, and place his fingers in the wounded hands of the Risen Christ - what is clear that the once doubting Thomas pronounces his faith for all ages to live: My Lord and My God! This profession of faith occurs at the manifestation of the Sacred Stigmata and the presentation of the wounded Heart of the Risen Lord. The Devotion to the Sacred Heart can only be understood in the faith, and this is an appeal to an ever more intense faith among its devotees.

2.] Jesus' appeal to the disciples down through the generations has echoed from this encounter with the doubting Thomas: do not be disbelieving but believing! This opening of the heart cannot be contemplated except in the faith: otherwise the retaining of it would seem to be simply in protest for the unjust wound inflicted on the dead body on the Cross. But, it is in His loving commitment to the Father that a horrendous capital punishment becomes the means of redeeming the world. It is in faith that we are able to go beyond the visible sign toward the mystery of invisible love to which this sign testifies.

3.] It is in this sense that the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus Christ is of a: sacramental" nature." it is a visible reality, and one that can even be touched. The visible sign is very strong, since it concerns a reality of our life and of our body - but in the service of something that is invisible. Without this visibility there would always be the real risk of sentimentality, or even of degrading magic. The Devotion to the Heart of Christ is not easy to manage in the measure that it gives much to see. This gospel scene ought to be read with great respect.

4.] It is sheer "eis-egesis" to present the doubting Thomas as the patron of "systematic doubt", authoritatively rejected by Vatican I [cf. DS 3013, 3014]. It should not be forgotten that Thomas earlier had a bright moment in another profession of faith. At the moment that Jesus decided to return to Jerusalem, as the death of His friend, Lazarus, had been announced, it is Thomas who states: **Let us go, too, and we will die with Him** [cf. Jn 11:16]. And after his doubt, Thomas would offer another great profession of faith, here being pondered.

5.] In the scene where Thomas is invited to verify the Sacred Stigmata, he represents a courageous faith - one that is presented as a witness to the veracity, authenticity of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. In all Paschal Faith, there has to be this audacity: the yearning to be with, to see, to share forever with the Lord. The appeal that the divine love be made more and more explicit in and through us is the legitimate prayer of every apostolic missionary. There is an internal life which faith enjoys: we do believe in the Risen Lord, and we beg that our lack of faith be helped to be strong faith. Faith needs to be solid as a rock, and lively

as a heartbeat. Its foundation is the solidity of God Himself as it is based on His word, and He can never deceive nor be deceived. Yet, it can culpably diminish even to the point of loss.

6.] The doubting Thomas is converted by the Sacred Stigmata - he makes his Profession of Faith before the Risen Lord, on seeing the signs of His Passion and Death, retained in His Glorious Body. This one Profession of faith comprehends the resurrection of Christ and the reality of His humanity, capable of suffering and death. God does not save us from the outside, by some juridical gesture or decree, or by some simple decision. He does this by becoming One among us, and will be so forever, God and Man. He takes His place in the heart of our daily lives and acts in us by taking up His Cross as what we also are: human. The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the fact that this Devotion retains its ultimate meaning from within the Mystery of the Resurrection, testifies to the fact of the irreversible character of the Incarnation. This is the spirit significance of the Sacred Stigmata: nothing is neglected, or forgotten of the sufferings of the Passion - the risen Lord will always remain the Crucified God in His assumed human nature. It is in this sense that the apparition to Thomas is important: this attests to the fact that the Sacred Heart remains open and that this sign of total-loving-self-giving expresses the love of the Invisible Father, and remains an eternal sign, retained in the Glorious Body of the Lord.

7.] Thomas' placing his hand in the open side of Christ goes much further in verifying faith than would ever be possible to us, in the knowledge of faith that we have. But, the Beatitude of Christ: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed - is much like Elizabeth's blessing directed to Mary by divine inspiration: Blessed is She who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled [cf. Lk 1:44,f.]. The more soothing gesture of the Apostle responds to the crude thrust of the soldier's lance and could be seen also as a gesture of reparation. Only love can truly respond to love - and the unfolding of compassion manifests that no human gesture can ever be on the level of the love that inspired this entire drama. The humanity of Love of Jesus Christ, the Most-Beloved Son of God arouses in our hearts a truly human compassion. All the saints and all the mystics have testified to this in the long centuries of the Church's life. Christianity cannot be dismissed to the mental gymnastics of its very beautiful inter-connected doctrines. The History of the New Covenant unto the remission of sins is that of most sublime Mercy that is simply beyond the grasp of human beings. God has taken the initiative in His Mercy but each believer is being called to respond with both lucidity and intelligence of mind, but also with the sincerity of heart.

8.] Thomas' confession is all - inclusive perhaps in two ways:

- Regarding Christ:

- 'My Lord', would refer to Jesus, Who has gone through the catharsis of the Passion and Death and now has risen;

- He is "God", the Second Person of the trinity - this, then, becomes an ejaculation for the elevation of the Eucharist.

- Regarding Thomas himself: Thomas will be led to give his life totally for the Risen Lord - he becomes, as traditions hold, the Apostolic Missionary to India

9.] The reality of the Pierced Heart of Christ relatively early showed signs of being noted in the early Christian literature, and that it eventually blossomed, at the proper time, into a full blown devotion. This is not merely because such a devotion proved itself inevitably to be attractive, but rather because it expresses an important aspect of faith in the Son of God and in His carrying out the Father's Plan of the New Creation, in the Holy Spirit. While some "artists' conceptions" of the Sacred Heart devotion may prove excessively "saccharin" for many tastes, it is always necessary to distinguish what is essential and what is accessory - tastes come and go across the centuries, but this reality remains central to the revelation concerning God: He is "Rich in Mercy."

10.] Ga 2:15-21: ... *what makes one righteous is not obedience to the Law, but faith in Jesus Christ....I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in this body I live in faith: faith in the son of God who loved me and who sacrificed himself for my sake. I cannot bring myself to give up God's gift: if the Law can justify us, there is no point in the death of Christ...*

4. Heart of Christ, Heart of the Church

a. The Church is called to be an assembly of believers, and it is really the Body of Christ. If the Church is simply the congregation of the faithful which each one would join, more or less intensely after participating in the act of Baptism, which unites each to Jesus Christ, the Church would hardly reach the ideal that it enjoys in the profession of her own vibrant faith. By the very fact that the Church is plunged into the Paschal Mystery of her Founder, each of the baptized is integrated into the Body of the Church.

b. It is within this Body of the Church that the Heart of the Risen Christ now beats for all eternity. The actual, present members of the Body of the Church are not the only human beings loved by God. By our Baptism and our bonds with the Church, we all know how we are united to Jesus Christ. A multitude of human beings are also the branches being vitalized by the main Vine, which is Jesus. These are nourished by the richness of His Sacred Heart and God wants everyone to be saved

[cf. 1 Tm 2:4, ff.] - and countless millions are, in ways known but to God [cf. LG 17; GS 22; AG 7, 9; RMI 10I CCC ## 1257; 1260; 1261]

c. The Church is the Body of Christ, and this calls to mind both the complexity as well as the cohesion of this world-wide organism. Since the Incarnation, it is impossible to think of a totally "invisible" congregation of the faithful. The visibility of the Church is inseparable from the Body of the Son of God made Man, He Who has shown His Glorious Stigmata to His apostles and Who had so fully shared their daily lives. It is admitted, of course, that the visibility of the Church and its local communities sometimes may be more successful in "concealing rather than revealing the face of Christ" [cf. GS 19 g]. Nonetheless, the visibility of the Church pertains to her very nature. In this Body of the Church the Sacred Heart of Jesus beats, manifesting the One Who so loved human beings. It would be disheartening to ever come to believe that the love of God for His own would imply that the Sacred Heart would beat less intensely with the passing of time. It is the Heart of Christ that keeps the Church alive, His body.

d. Without this certitude of faith, the Church becomes "diluted" and is little more than, than some kind of enterprise engaged in keeping alive the memory of her Founder. On the contrary, thanks to the eternal vitality of the Risen Lord, the Heart in her entirety remains living and active in order to accomplish in the Spirit her works of salvation. It is necessary to be very realistic: this is the Sacred Heart of the Son of God made Man Who animates the Church through His Holy Spirit for her service of the world, totally loved by God Who created it. The bond between the humanity of Jesus Christ and the vitality of the Church is absolute. This is the only manner of considering the Incarnation of the Word as a living reality Who determines the existence of the World. Through the Church, the whole world is served through the love manifested in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

e. This is the folly, the stupidity of the Father's Plan, worked out through the Cross [cf. 1 Co 1: 17, ff.]. The Creator did not bring this world about from nothing for nothing, just so that reality would be here. The entire Creation plan has for its goal that thinking beings might forever be with the Trinity in peace and happiness. each thinking being - and, in some subordinated way, the cosmos is called to give honor and praise to the most blessed Trinity. We need to call to mind that no devotion - except perhaps the Eucharist, the signs of which disappear in eternity - is not a goal unto itself. All goes back to the fundamental paternity of God.

f. As the Heart of Christ beats for His Heavenly Father, so the Church expresses her most profound interior movement whenever she turns toward the Father, in repentance, adoration, praise and thanksgiving - as is done in the Eucharist. The Church can be described as the presence in this world of the Father's love. The Church is the Sacrament of this absolute divine love. This is the sole

manner of considering it in a just manner and of not reducing it to less than it is. The image of the Sacred Heart of Christ allows us to approach the deepest realities of the faith.

g. The Sacred Heart of Jesus may be described as beating within the Church, and provides life giving energy that courses through her all over the world especially through the real sacramental presence. With this being said, we know that the sacraments are instituted for human beings, but that God Himself is not restricted by them: "... God Himself has bound salvation to the Sacrament of Baptism, but He Himself is not bound by His sacraments..." [cf. CCC # 1257] - "... [For those brought up in other religious traditions] salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace, which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them **formally** part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way that is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ: it is the result of His sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his, or her free cooperation..." [cf. *Redemptoris Missio* #10]. - "... the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers **in a way known to God** of the Paschal Mystery... [cf. GS 22 § 5; LG 16; AG 7] [CCC # 1260].

h. This is from Vatican II: "...For by His Incarnation, He, the Son of God, has in a certain way united Himself with each human being. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with **a Human Heart He loved** ... All this holds true not only for Christians but also for all human beings of good will in whose hearts **grace is active invisibly** [cf. LG 16]. For since Christ died for all, and since all human beings are in fact called to one and the same destiny, **which is divine**, we must hold that **the Holy Spirit offers to all** the possibility of being made partners, **in a way known to God**, in the Paschal Mystery..." [cf. GS 22 § 5].

i. This does not mean that the Church "falls from the grace" of importance - even though there is no mathematical estimate possible regarding how many non-believers are thus favored: the majority do not belong to the Church "formally". The Church is not merely "accessory" - yet, we need to respect the ever-abiding presence of the Holy Spirit; the eternal beating of the Heart of the Risen Christ, constantly, eternally interceding as the great High Priest for His People [cf. III, q. 22, a. 5]. None of the Apostles, and none of His followers ever thought that Jesus was just for them - the whole Church learned from Jesus' gentle, but firm injunction to Mary Magdalen: do not cling to Me! [cf. Jn 20:17]. Even though the Church is the Universal Sacrament of Salvation - and that only in Christ's Name, our only Redeemer is there for all the world [cf. Ph 2:11; 1 Tm 2:5, ff.]

j. Certainly, the infinite Charity of the Heart of Christ is a mystery, as is the reality of the Church - an effect of that love. The Church cannot be thought of merely as a sociological or political reality. Certainly one could study the sociology of the Church as well as its "politics" as for example, the recent and successful *Est-Politik*, the out-reach to Russia, and the Far East. In the end, however, the Church is a Mystery of God's Love.

k. Rm 13:3-21: *...In the light of the grace I have received I want to urge each one among you not to exaggerate his real importance...all of us in union with Christ form one body, and as parts, we belong to each other...Our gifts differ according to the grace given us... do not let your love be a pretense, but sincerely prefer good over evil Love each other as brothers and sisters should, and have a profound respect for each other...If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying....Do all you can to live at peace with everyone...*

1.] The Intense Life in the Body of the Church:

a.] Rv 5:6-15: *...Then I saw standing ... a Lamb that seems to have been sacrificed...The Lamb came forward to take the scroll from the right hand of the One sitting on the throne...four animals prostrated and with the 24 elders ... they sang a New Hymn: You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seal of it, because you were sacrificed and with your blood you bought men and women for God of every race, language, people and nation, and made them a line of kings and priests, to serve our God and to rule the world...Then I heard all living things in creation...crying: to the One who is sitting on the Throne and to the Lamb, be all praise, honor, glory and power, forever and ever...*

a.] The sacramental life - the "out-reach" of divine Love to His People is an expression of the profound vitality of this Body of Christ which is the Church. The sacraments in general are the expression of the unique vitality of the Church, covering all the stages in life - from re-birth, to nourishment, to states in life, to healing, anointing. Furthermore, prayer, the life of charity and all, especially the willingness to pardon offenses are also expressions of this vitality. To forget this could run the risk of reducing the Church's life to "magic" - *hocus pocus*...

b.] It is very necessary to emphasize the intimate coherence between the Holy Spirit and the entire sacramental system - as well as in the devotions of the Church. All the sacraments have flowed forth from the open Heart of Jesus Christ, as that blood and water which give new life to the Church [cf. LG 3; SC 5] - and through her to all humanity. It might be said that the Pierced Side of Jesus served as a kind of early Pentecost, thanks to which all the later out-pourings of the Spirit over the Church have become possible: it was first necessary for Christ to

go in order to send the Paraclete [cf. Jn 16:7]. The Paschal Christ pours out on the whole world His Holy Spirit - and this implies that He has endowed the Church with the richness of the Seven sacraments which He instituted.

c.] The infinite will of God has chosen through Christ to pour His Mercy through the humble sacramental signs. As has been noted above, God is infinitely free - and can extend His grace of salvation even independent of the sacramental signs "in ways known to Him alone". Ordinarily God does choose this lowly way of acting - even though numerically some theologians maintain, or ask the question - whether the Church numerically is an extraordinary grace?

d.] The entire sacramental system has been placed by Christ under the safeguard of the Deposit of Faith entrusted to the Bishop, the Successor of Peter. This is the Bishop who unites us at the same time through the succeeding generations to that original group of the companions of Jesus - and in space, to the other Churches spread all over the universe. All the sacraments flow from this ministry and from the imposition of hands received down through the ages, in an unbroken succession. When one celebrates Baptism, which is the Rite of Entry into the entire sacramental mystery, the priest anoints with the holy oil, blessed by the Bishop, thus bringing out the Episcopal origin of his action. One needs to keep alive this bonding with the Bishop in all of the sacraments. The Fountain of Grace flows out of the Pierced Heart of Jesus Christ, and is then channeled towards the faithful by the ministry of the Bishop. It is here that the ceremony of the blessing of the oils finds its deep explanation.

e.] The sacramental structure is totally dependent on these two elements, Baptism and the Eucharist. All begins with Baptism and all tends toward its Eucharistic plenitude. This is the totally entire life of the Christian in community - rooted in the new baptismal birth, all tends to become Eucharistic. The Baptismal water, flowing in the Spirit of the Pierced Heart of Jesus Christ, vivifies the recipients and through them, the entire Christian community. The Eucharistic assembly is in itself the work of the Holy Spirit - this Spirit who has flowed with such profusion from the Pierced Side of the Lord. The other sacraments are ordered around Baptism and the Eucharist, including the three degrees of the one sacrament of Holy Orders, and by the celebration of marriage of the baptized - a celebration which finds its true richness when it takes place within the Mystery of the Eucharist.

f.] It might be helpful here, too, to bring out two further points of the sacramental mystery which have a close bond with the living reality of the Heart of Jesus Christ:

- the Pardon which flows from the Father spreads all over the world, beginning with the Pierced Heart of Jesus Christ. It is there we find the full force of the infinite mercy of God that is beyond any limit, or frontier.

- at the hour of one's death, the Baptized believer is invited to pass over with Jesus Christ to the Heavenly Father. this is the image of the Crucified, crushed by His own oblation, who comes before one and invites each of the dying, or painfully ill to embrace the Cross. This helps to make sure that physical death does not crush the dying believer, but rather the Sacrament of Anointing may increase one's yearning for the Lord. Death, then, is the supreme act of faith, and even if one's heart is not materially pierced, it is pierced with the desire that one has of God.

2.] The Sacred Heart and the Eucharist

a.] Popular piety, sustained by biblical faith, very early made the connection between the Pierced side of Jesus Christ and the Most Holy Eucharist. In Europe, early in time, Holy Thursday night, some repositories were made with the image of the dead Christ, with emphasis given to His Sacred Stigmata. Jesus in the Blessed sacrament on this special commemoration of Holy Week manifested Jesus as a Prisoner, due to His powerlessness of being the Crucified One.

b.] More than any imagery the Eucharist indicates the total gift of self - the Paschal Mystery culminates the total engagement of the Son of God in the human enterprise. The Church has kept alive these vital bonds between the life of Christ and the sacraments, and Encounter with the Trinity through the humanity of Jesus Christ, particularly in His hypostatic union, and Paschal Mystery. Devotion to the Blessed sacrament literally flows from the celebration of the sacrificial communion on the altar. Eucharistic spirituality is meant to fecundate the entire dynamism of the Baptismal way. The Eucharist is the memorial of the life of Christ given totally for the Heavenly Father and the eternal reward of the faithful.

c.] The entire Christian spirituality has directed people through the centuries on how they should unite their sacrifices of their lives and ministry in union with the one sacrifice of Christ [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.; 1 P 2: 4, ff.]. The offering to the Father, in union with the Son, in the Holy Spirit of the struggles of life, one's prayer and trials, one's vocation and work. This is the fundamental attitude of forgetfulness of self and the genuine self-realization that is to be noted in the rejection of all egoism.

d.] Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus leads its devotees to make this oblation of themselves of their entire lives. This devotion, properly lived, will lead one not to concentrate on oneself, and to give less effort in all self-seeking, to the point of a total self-giving. The more one understands Christ's Self-giving to His Father, in the Holy Spirit, symbolized in His Pierced Heart, the more is

one moved with grace to imitation of all this. It is in this sense that the Sacred Heart of Jesus may be seen as a devotion that is a synthesis of the entire revealed Deposit of Faith.

e.] The Eucharist is presented at the summit of all the movement of salvation, and it is not wrong to maintain that Jesus had to assume humanity in order to become our Bread. There is no forgetfulness for the mystery of the word of God and its proclamation, nor for the other sacraments - rather, there is presented the Eucharist as the “Cup of Synthesis”, the privileged place of the ecclesial life and of its overture to the world. The truths of the faith shed light on each other. It is certain that the primordial Light is that of the Trinitarian Mystery, and it is rightfully insisted that there is an intermingling of the Mysteries of the Most Blessed Trinity, the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

f.] Jn 6:43-58: *...No one can come to Me unless he is drawn by the Father Who sent Me, and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets: they will be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father and learn from it, is to come to me...Anyone who believes has eternal life... I am the bread of life. ...if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat My flesh and drink My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day....He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in Me and I live in him. As I, Who am sent by the living Father, Myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats Me will draw life from Me....anyone who eats this bread will live for ever...It is the .. Spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life...*

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B. Trinitarian Reflections on the SACRED HEART of JESUS

“... If the Lord has set his **heart** on you ... it was for love of you...” [cf. Dt 7:7, f.]

“... His **heart** was moved with pity...” [cf. Mt 9:36]

“...**Learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart...**” [cf. Mt 11:29]

“... His **heart** was moved with pity...” [cf. Mt 14:14]

“... My **heart** is moved with pity for the crowd...” [cf. Mt 15:32].

“... My **heart** is nearly broken with sorrow...” [Mt 26:38]

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[Encyclical of Pope Pius XII, Haurietis **Aquas** on the Sacred Heart - May 15, 1956 -
and

Encyclical of Pope John Paul II Dives **in Misericordia** on Divine Mercy - Nov. 30,
1980]

[cf. Card. Luigi M. Ciappi, OP, *Il Cuore di Cristo Centro del Mistero della Salvezza*.
Roma Ed. Cuore di Cristo 1981, pp. 119 -158].

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[I] The Eternal Father

Introduction:

[1] The Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on the Sacred Heart was published on the centenary of the extension of the Feast of the Sacred Heart to the universal Church. This was an encyclical that had strong appeal from theologians and biblical scholars, and also served for a deeper appreciation for the natural symbolism of the heart.

[2] A common theme that runs throughout the papal teachings on the Sacred Heart did not begin with Haurietis *Aquas*, but is found also in two preceding Encyclicals on this same mystery:

- Leo XIII, *Annum Sacrum*, May 25, 1899.

- Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, May 8, 1928.

[a] Leo XIII described the Sacred Heart in these terms: it is the symbol and the image of the infinite charity of Jesus Christ, which inspires us to love Him anew, thus making it “natural” to consecrate ourselves, as believers, to His Sacred Heart.

[b] Pius XI invited believers to consider that among all the proofs of the infinite goodness of our Redeemer, the Sacred Heart is particularly outstanding. Its deeper implications could have the capacity of re-enkindling the love of believers’ hearts. The very love of God is called to mind in this devotion by a very special cult. The riches of His infinite love are made manifest to the receptive believer by a readily understood image, inviting all to fathom more intensely the depths of God’s love and mercy. It is in this reality that there lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[c] Pius XII pondered deeply on the efforts of his predecessors to the Throne of Peter. His intention in writing his Letter on the Sacred Heart to show its very rich biblical background. Then, he chose to propose for the consideration of the Church the intimate nature and the perennial richness of devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. In doing this, he invoked divine revelation as the primary source for contemplation. The devotion to the divine love of God is taught to us by the Scriptures and by an ancient and holy tradition. The Sacred Heart Devotion may indeed be identified with contemplating on the divine love - that which prevails within the Trinity, which then is the source of all goodness diffusive of itself.

[d] John Paul II develops these ideals in his Letter on the Mercy of God. He teaches [cf. **DM** # 1]: “... The more the Church’s mission is centered upon man - the more it is, so to speak, anthropocentric - the more it must be confirmed and actualized theocentrically, that is to say, be directed in Jesus Christ to the Father... I wish to say that openness to Christ, who is the Redeemer of the world, fully ‘reveals man to himself’, can only be achieved through an ever more mature reference to the Father and His love...”

[3] The Sacred Heart calls to mind the immense love that has moved the Divine Word to become incarnate for our salvation and for our redemption. It is this interior divine love that inspired the Son of God to accept the Father’s plan and to assume a mortal body.

[a] It would be a severe limitation of this ideal to think that the emphasis here is simply on the human love of Jesus Christ. He tells us: Whoever sees Me, sees the Father - Jesus is the **ICON** of the Invisible God - He is the **perfect copy** of the divine nature [cf. Jn 14:9; Col 1:15; Heb1:1, ff.]. The Sacred Heart is always seen as a symbol of the Love of the Redeemer, the IInd Person of the Most Blessed Trinity This is a **“divine” Heart** because of the hypostatic union - this union in the divine Person of the Son of God.

[b] There is more than what theologians would call the “theandric” love, that is, a divine love only because it pertains to the Divine Person which is likewise human, by its intrinsic nature. This is a love that is principally that of the Uncreated Love of the Son of God made man.

[c] St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the relationship existing really in God is really the same reality as the essence - and these relationships are distinct from the divine essence by a distinction of reason. Relationship is included in the reference to the correlative term - a reference that is not included in the concept of essence [cf. I, q. 28, a. 2 c, and ad 2 um].

[d] The relationship between the physical Heart of Jesus and His divine love is direct and explicit in virtue of the hypostatic union. The symbolism, however, of Christ’s Heart in the order to the Father and Holy Spirit is necessary due to the unity of the nature and of the intimate immanence, or compenetration of the divine Persons among themselves, known as ***perichoresis - circuminsession*** [cf. I, q. 42, a. 3, ad 2 um; a. 5]. This is rather indirect, and correlative through the distinction and relative opposition which always remains, along with the real and conceptual simultaneity among the Divine Persons.

[e] On the basis of these theological principles, it might be concluded that the Sacred Heart, by the very fact that it is **a natural symbol of the subsistent Uncreated Love in the Divine Word**, or of the Word as loving humanity, is likewise **the symbol of the Father and of the Spirit**, as Loving humanity in the Word and with the Word. In creatures, all actions are to be attributed to the persons - this is all the more so true regarding God to Whom pertains existence in an immediate manner. Due to His simplicity, it is not possible that there be any real distinction between His nature, His operative faculties, His operations, His personality, and His existence [cf. I, q. 3, a. 3-7]. When we say: Uncreated Love. this means the Loving God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[4] No one has ever seen God, writes St. John, in order to stress the truth that the only Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known. This ‘**making known**’ reveals God in the most profound mystery of his being, One and Three, surrounded by unapproachable light. Nevertheless, through this ‘making known’ by Christ we know God above all in **His relationship of love for humans**: in His ‘philanthropy’. It is precisely here that His invisible nature becomes in a special way ‘visible’ than through all the other ‘things that have been made’: it becomes visible in Christ and through Christ, through His actions and words, and finally through His death on the cross and His resurrection. In this way, in Christ and through Christ, God also becomes **especially visible in His mercy**: that is to say, there is emphasized that attribute of the divinity which the OT, using various concepts and terms, already defined as ‘mercy.’ Christ confers on the whole of the

OT tradition about God's mercy a definitive meaning. Not only does He speak of it and explain it by the use of comparisons and parables, but above all He Himself makes it incarnate and personifies it. He Himself, in a certain sense, is mercy. To the person who see it in Him - and finds it in Him - God becomes 'visible' in a particular way as the Father, Who is rich in mercy. [DM # 2].

[a] The symbolism of Christ's Heart is an absolute transcendence because it reaches all three of the most August Trinity. It needs to be remembered that we are treating here of an analogical representation, still more unlike the 'Original' than like it, with an infinite distance from the divine significance. It is not unlike the formulae defined by the Church - while they shed some light on the terms of the mystery, the reality is still infinitely superior to the best description that can be offered of It.

[b] It is noteworthy, too, that **the open side of Jesus Christ remained visible** even after the resurrection [cf. Jn 20:19, ff.]. This has been interpreted as a most eloquent manner of manifesting the existence of the Love of the Three Divine Persons for humanity. Yet, the Wound itself needs a deeper explanation as through the Heart toward which it leads. A wound, of itself, might not be as sublimely suited, on the natural level, to illumine us on the intimate supernatural reality of such love, on the infinite treasures of wisdom and knowledge included in this. The Heart manifests the riches poured out in such an abundant wealth through creation and redemption.

[c] By this, there is not intended to imply even that the "Heart" is the absolute and total image, the most perfect and proper sign of His divine love. There is no perfect way of "seeing" or adoring adequately what is represented by the Heart: there is simply no human image that is possible to envelop such a mystery.

[d] Having said this, any believer who comes to understand what is implied in the Heart of Christ for the world is brought to adore by this image of the Heart the very symbol and the vestige, in common parlance, of the love of the Person - in this case, of all three divine Persons. The Heart represents the merciful nature of God, aflame with love for sinful humanity - asking, begging, pleading for a response: "... I myself taught Ephraim how to walk, I took them in my arms - yet, they have not understood that I was the One looking for them. I led them with leading strings of love, with reins of kindness. I was like someone who lifts an infant close against his cheek; stooping down to him I gave him his food..." [cf. Ho 11:3, ff.].

1. The Sacred Heart of Jesus and Trinitarian Love

1. Before His own towns-people in Nazareth, Jesus refers to the words of the Prophet Isaiah; 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...' These phrases, according to Luke, are His first messianic declaration. They are followed by the actions and words known through the Gospels. By these actions and words Christ makes the Father present among men.

2. Once this extraordinary mystery of God's love is discovered, even partially, and in the most limited manner imaginable - as, perhaps through the open side of Jesus Christ - one truly encounters the love of all three Divine Persons. Perhaps the only fitting response is adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petition, reparation, mission.

a. The theologians tell us that the ideological value of a symbol and its extension, when it is an arbitrary sign, is one agreed to by human beings - or, even the semi-arbitrary symbol, as in the case of the Sacraments [as there is a connection between water, oil, bread, wine and life] - these realities all have within them the aptitude of being elevated to a higher level to indicating a supernatural reality.

b. In the matter of natural symbols, but those which are in no way proportionate to the intimate nature that they signify - in this case, the value and the extension might depend more on the interpreter than on the power of the symbol itself. There is often needed some education, explanation, insight into the depth and sublimity of these symbols. An example sometimes used is that of the national flag: some would burn it; others might die for it and all that it has meant for them and their families.

c. In the Sacraments of the Church, the symbolism of water in Baptism - of oil in Confirmation, Holy Order, Anointing of the Sick, the bread and wine of the Eucharist - all of these symbols have led to a vast literature and reflection on the part of the Church Fathers, Doctors and Doctoresses of the long history of theological contemplation.

d. With the inherent symbolism of the Sacred Heart, it is clear that it has a didactic message - the "heart" is so intimately connected with the deepest human realities of thought, decision, affection. Furthermore, it is commemorative of all that God stands for, summarized in the wonderful expression of St John: "... **God is love!**" [cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16].

1.] Some see the imagery in the positioning of the angels with flaming swords at the gate of paradise as a constant reminder of Paradise Lost [cf. Gn 3:24] - in like manner, when God in the storm, would shoot His arrows in anger at those who would oppose Him:

“... Yahweh thundered from heaven, the Most High made His voice heard; He let His arrows fly and scattered them, launched the lightnings and routed them. [cf. Ps 18:15, ff.]

“... God will shoot them with His own arrow...” [cf. Ps 64:8]

“... When the waters saw that it was You, God, they recoiled, shuddering to their depths. The clouds poured down water, the sky thundered, Your arrows darted out. Your thunder crashed as it rolled, Your lightning lit up the world, the earth shuddered and quaked... [cf. Ps 77:16, ff.]

“... Yahweh, lower Your heavens, come down to us! Touch the mountains, make them smoke, flash your lightning and scatter them, shoot Your arrows, rout them!” [cf. Ps 144:5, f.].

2.] When the storm was over, God would lay aside His Bow, hanging it high in the clouds, out of reach of all: the implication was that He would not hurl His arrows at Israel any more: the rainbow is still the symbol of peace:

“... God said: Here is **the sign of the Covenant** I make between Myself and you and every living creature with you for all generations: I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the Covenant between Me and the earth... When I gather the clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the Covenant between Myself and you and every living creature of every kind... When the bow is in the clouds I shall see it and call to mind the lasting Covenant between God and every living creature of every kind that is found on the earth...” [cf. Gn 9:12-16].

3.] There was fascination with the rainbow, this natural wonder of the universe:

“... See the rainbow and praise its Maker, so superbly beautiful in its splendor. Across the sky it forms a glorious arc drawn by the hands of the Most High...” [cf. Si 43:11, ff.].

3. The “Ark of the Covenant” was also a sign of the presence of the Lord, for it contained one of His most precious gifts to the People of God, the gift of the Torah [cf. Ex 25:10-12]. Through the observance of its contents, the Israelites were promised the Covenant that would enable them to live in the abundance of the Promised Land.

a. With these ancient symbols and reminders, the Israelites were able to develop a real Code of Life. Of a much higher level would be **the symbol of the Sacred Heart**. This symbol recalls to the minds and hearts of believers **the full story of Divine Love**, from the Creation, the separation of the waters in creation for life - the separation of the Sea of Reeds for salvation - the separation of the Jordan when the Ark passed through. All of this pales in the presence of the supreme symbol of the Sacred Heart. This is based on a symbol that finds its roots in the hypostatic union. This sublime union rendered an “ordinary” heart the bearer of a connatural message - for the greater and more extended profusion of grace and glory, proper to the New Testament.

b. Paul introduces his Letter to the Ephesians with a Hymn on the Mystery of Salvation and of the Church: “... Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... before the world was made He chose us in Christ for his own kind purposes. Thorough His blood, we all gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins... under His predetermined plan He guides all things for His greater glory, for the people who put their hopes in Christ. We have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit and Promise, the pledge of inheritance that brings freedom...” [cf. Ep 1:1-14].

c. This is the mystery that has been revealed through the Spirit to His holy Apostles and Prophets, and was unknown to past generations. Non-believers share in this same inheritance in that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them in Christ Jesus through the gospel [cf. Ep 3:5-6]. This is a surprising height of ecumenism - and promise of salvation for all those who do what they can, God does not deny grace.

4. Before His own townspeople in Nazareth, Jesus refers to the words of Isaiah: ‘...The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ These phrases for Lk are Christ’s first messianic declaration. They are followed by the actions and words known through the gospel. By these actions and words Christ makes the Father present among men. [cf. **DM # 3**].

a. Especially through His life-style and through His actions, Jesus revealed that love is present in the world in which we live - an effective love, a love that addresses itself to humanity and embraces everything noticed in contact with suffering, injustice and poverty - in contact with the whole ‘human condition’ which

in various ways manifests the varied dimensions of human limitation and frailty, both physical and moral. This is precisely the mode and the sphere in which love manifests itself that in biblical language is called *mercy*.

b. Christ reveals God “Rich in mercy” - this is not merely one teaching of many - this is a reality that is made present by Jesus Christ - making the Trinity present as love and mercy is, in Christ’s own consciousness, the fundamental touchstone of His Missions. This is confirmed by both His words and deeds. On the basis of this way of manifesting the presence of the Trinity as love and mercy, Jesus makes mercy one of the principle themes of His preaching, particularly His parables of mercy [cf. Lk 15] - as the Prodigal Son, the Good Shepherd looking for the lost, the stray, the wounded. In this connection, it is necessary to note that Christ in revealing love-mercy of the Trinity, at the same time challenged people that they should be guided in their loves by love and mercy. This requirement forms part of the very essence of the messianic message, and constitutes the heart of the Gospel.

c. The messianic message about mercy preserves a particular divine-human dimension. Christ - the very fulfillment of messianic prophecy - by becoming the Incarnation of the love that is manifested with particular force with regard to suffering, the unfortunate and sinners, makes present and thus more fully reveals the Trinity, rich in mercy. At the same time, by becoming for people a model of merciful love for others, Christ proclaims by His actions even more than by His words, that call to mercy which is one of the essential elements of the Gospel. This is not just a matter of fulfilling a commandment, or an obligation of an ethical nature - this is the case of satisfying a condition of major importance for God to reveal Himself in mercy to human beings: ‘the merciful shall obtain mercy!’

5. The way that this Trinitarian life is ordinarily communicated to those who have received the grace of the “Church” is through the sacraments. St. Thomas has a beautiful description describing them as: ‘certain relics, remnants of the divine Incarnation’ [Prol. in IV Sent.].

a. Christ instituted the sacraments in memorial of Himself, as instruments to apply to individuals the fruits of His universal redemption - i.e., his life, and Paschal Mystery. In this sense, we can think of the Sacraments as Relics of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - as they flowed from His pierced side [cf. SC 5; LG 3], the New Adam in the sleep of death on the Cross [cf. St. Aug., Tr 120 in Ioannem 2].

b. The word “sacrament” indicates that they are intimately connected with “sanctification” - Thomists often use this language to describe them:

- the Efficient Cause of the sacraments is the Paschal Mystery;

- the Formal Cause is grace a share in the divine nature, an entitative habit, and the operative habits that flow, the virtues;

- the Final Cause is immediately the Church, and ultimately eternal life.

c. The sacraments are a Commemorative Sign of the past, that is the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. They are a Demonstrative Sign of the fruit produced in us by His Paschal Mystery. And they are a Prophetic Sign or a pre-announcement of future glory [cf. III, q. 60, a. 3 c].

d. Perhaps in some way, this doctrine might be applied to the Sacred Heart the source of all divine Love The Heart is the ICON, par excellence, in the New Covenant - the source of the Cross. The Heart is a most suited sign to signify that multiform pouring forth of divine grace. The Sacred Heart, then, in this sense, might be “translated” by each of the Seven Sacraments, all of which are indications of that interior divine love poured out on creation.

e. The seven sacraments are considered to be rivulets of the salvific body and blood of the Lord flowing forth from the *hostium vitae, the gate of life*. This is St. Augustine’s description of the open side of Jesus.

2. The Heart of Jesus and the Trinitarian Love *ad Intra*

1. Jn’s Gospel - and the subsequent tradition of the Church with him - are fascinated with this line: “... The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus; Simon Peter signed to him and said: ‘Ask who it is he means,’ - so, **leaning back on Jesus’ breast**, the beloved disciple said: ‘Who is it, Lord?’ [cf. Jn 13:23, ff.

a. A significant commentary on this is found later on: “... Peter turned and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them - **the one who had leaned on his breast** and the supper and had said to Him: ‘Lord, who is it that will betray you..?’ [cf. Jn 21:20] The ancient liturgy will comment on this: supporting his head on the breast of the Lord Jesus He drank in the life-giving source of the Gospel, pouring forth from the side of the Lord.

b. This Last Will and Testament of the dying Jesus goes on in His words to this disciple and to His own Mother: ... woman, this is your son ... behold your Mother! [cf. Jn 19:26, f.]. It is immediately following all this that the decisive action of the soldier takes place: “...one of the soldiers **pierced his side** with a lance; and immediately there came forth blood **and water**. This is the evidence of one who saw it - trustworthy evidence, and he knows he speaks the truth - and he gives it to you so that you may believe as well. Because all this happened to fulfill the words of Scripture...” [cf. Jn 19:35, ff.].

c. Because of this revelation, and the traditions connected with it - the Letters attributed to "John" would be the best vehicle to summarize this entire drama with his remarkable word: God is Love [cf. I Jn 4:8, 16]. In these readings we find solid support for these major devotions in the life of the Church: the devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament [Jn 6] - devotion to Mary, the sorrowful Mother [Jn 2, Cana: do whatever He tells you! - Jn 19: the Passion and Death, the Church's Spiritual Maternity]. Mary is Jesus' helpmate in the establishment of **the New Covenant** - the Immolated Lamb is the Spouse of the Church, who has given His word through the signs of His Immolation, the Sacred Stigmata

2. Inspired by the Apostle's first-hand experience of the love of God, we enter into the spirit of his First Letter: "... Something which has existed **from the beginning**, that we have heard, that we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched, and touched with our hands: the Word, Who is life - this is our Subject. That life was made visible: we saw it and are **giving testimony**, telling you of the eternal life which was with the Father and has been made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ..." [cf. I Jn 1:1-3].

a. With this magnificent witness of God's love expressed through Jesus, with its sublime accents of God's Love and Mercy, the Fathers of the Church, the doctors and doctoresses, theologians, saints and mystics - so many have taken this inspiration up and built upon it the spiritual edifice of their interior lives. Many began with pondering the extraordinary mystery of **the Wounded Side of Jesus Christ**.

b. In the OT, there as the very enigmatic **I AM** as the response to Moses seeking to find out just Who the God of the Desert is [cf. Ex 3:14] - only very gradually did the second divine Name of Exodus become manifest: "...Yahweh, Yahweh, **a God of tenderness and compassion**, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness, for thousands He maintains his kindness..." [cf. Ex 34:5-7; cf. also Ex 20:5,f.; Nb 14:17-19; Dt 5:9,f.; 7:9; 2 Ch 30:9; Ne 1:5; Jr 32: 17,f.; Dn 9:8,ff.; Ps 51:1,ff.; 86:5,15; 100:4,f.; 103:7,f.; 111:3,ff.; 112:1,ff.; 116:5; 130:7,f.; 145:7-10; Jl 2:12,f.; Jon 4:2; Ne9:16-19; Na 1:2,f; Si 2:10,f.].

c. From dictating His enigmatic Divine Name, from the thundering mountain, in the lightning and the cosmic disturbance - eventually all this quiets down, and it is the whisper of God on the gentle breeze: after the fire there came the sound of the gentle breeze and there God was [cf. I K 19:9,ff] - this desert scene is almost reminiscent of the Garden of Eden when God was simply "there": "... the man and his wife heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid..." [cf. Gn 3:8, f.].

d. Throughout the NT, the invitation will be to follow after Jesus Christ in the manner as described again by St. John: "... Thomas said: 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we now the way? Jesus said: **I am the Way, the Truth and the Life** ..." [cf. Jn 14:6]:

- He is the Way: in Him we have access to the Trinity - He makes the Father known to the world [cf. Jn 1:18; 12:45; 14:9];

- He is the Truth: He is the Teacher and the personification of worship in spirit and in truth which alone leases the Father [cf. Jn 4:23, f.];

- He is the Life: to know the Father, present in the Son, is eternal life [cf. Jn 17:3].

e. In some way, the Father and the Holy Spirit are involved in this aspect of Jesus' life: the Word made flesh is the way, the Redeemer and the Mediator - the Father and the Spirit are the Truth, the Life and Charity. This is the unique ultimate term of the path that leads the intellectual creature to the conquest of supreme happiness. The identity of nature, the possession of the same infinite Goodness, demand that the Divine Persons are all in an equal grade, incommensurable Charity.

f. However, this communion of nature between the three Divine Persons does not impede the essential divine attributes from acting in their "proper" manner - in accord with the "Properties" of each of the Divine Persons. In the area of "Appropriations", it is the divine properties that appeal to our intelligence:

- the Father is Life in the most perfect and eternal way - He is not only in some common and almost generic manner, because God is endowed necessarily with the most perfect intelligence, always in act [I, q. 18, a. 3, c.].

- as Father, that is, as the powerful Person that He is, the Principle of the entire Trinity, He is capable of producing the Word of His Divine Heart: the Word of His Infinite Mind. This is the living expression, substantial and subsistent, of the Infinite Being proper to Him.

- similarly, the Word, precisely because produced by way of intellectual activity, deriving from an eternally living principle, to which He is supremely united by identity of nature of which He is the "Expression", or the most faithful Image in virtue of the dynamism that is proper to knowledge.

- and finally, because He is identical also on the level of being with the Intellect from Which He proceeds - there simply is not in God any real distinction between being and understanding, between the ontological and the logical orders, as there is in us].

- the Word that is eternally Spoken, with all propriety, is the only-begotten, the most-beloved Son of the Father, in Whom He is well pleased [cf. I, q. 27, aa. 1-2]". This is my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on Him!' [cf. Mt 3:17, par.; Mt 17:5, par.].

3. Therefore, through the centuries, the theology of the Church by means of its **contemplation, study, heeding the Magisterium and its lived experience [cf. DV 8]** - ponders the Father as speaking and generating -, and the Church prays over the Son as eternally spoken and generated. The Father is the "First Principle" without any other preceding Principle ["Un-principled" does not help much here as an English word!] - within the Trinity - [and also of all Creation] the Father is the "Principle" of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Son is not the Principle of the Heavenly Father, but is - with the Father - of the Holy Spirit and of all creation.

a. In this sense, the Eternal Word is the Principle from a Principle: God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. The Father is rightly spoken of as the Origin of the Eternal Trinity. However, the Divine Son, even though He has life and truth from the Father, He is all this in a passive, partial, accidental, finite manner - but, shares equally, eternally, consubstantially with the Father.

b. In infinite manner, Jesus is Light and Truth and Goodness - in His substantial and infinite essence. He is all this in a "subsistent", and hence, "Personal" way. Since He is the ICON of the Invisible God, He is both the ideal and the **real Image** of the Father. Therefore, He rightfully enjoys the flow of titles that the apostolic writer pours out upon Him in divine inspiration: "...He is the **radiant Light** of God's glory - and the **Perfect Copy** of his nature - sustaining the universe by His powerful command - He has gone to take His place in heaven at the right hand of divine majesty ..' [cf. Heb 1:3, f.]

c. The Second Person is both Image and Son because He is indeed the Father's Word: "... In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through Him. All that came to be had life in Him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower..." [cf. Jn 1:1, ff.].

4. In addition to being "Light" and "Life", the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are also "Love", "Charity", Mercy". They are this integrally speaking, as these realities pertain to the inner Trinitarian life eternally before being poured out in time as Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. All three Persons are God, consubstantial One with the Other - co-equal in being, in substance, in activity - in eternity, in splendor, in power.

a. All three Persons, then, are infinite Will and Love, as well as eternal Truth and Goodness. They are this in the divine nature as well as in the three Divine Persons, in the relationships of paternity, filiation and active and passive spiration. As Father, Son and Holy Spirit they are perfectly intelligently and supremely good - they cannot NOT mutually take complaisance in One Another [as the Father declares regarding the Son at Baptism and the Transfiguration]. They are eternally infinite in communicating Love and Goodness, Mercy and Wisdom

b. It is precisely this unique operation that is both vital and immanent, proceeding from the Father, through the Son and into the Holy Spirit that we have this Third Person, "Personal Love". He is the perfect result, of the reciprocal love of Benevolence [wishing the Other well] of the three divine Persons.

c. Some of the titles used to develop this idealized Reality may not appeal to modern parlance: the "mystical ring "of union of the Father and the Son; the "kiss of the Trinity". He is "Gift" not that of the Father to the Son, nor that of the Son to the Father - but Personal Gift because of His unique property of being communicated by the Father and by the Son to Creation - especially through the infusion of grace and charity.

5. The Holy Spirit equally is Life, Truth as God - however, the Spirit is neither "generating", nor generated" - but, is spirated. By identity in nature with the Father and the Son, He communicates Their divine perfection in its totality, by way of spiration: He breathes where He will - without any diminution, or subordination. He is Charity in a particular manner in that He is the Personal Love between Father and Son, the affective, subsistent and distinct expression, both of the Goodness of the Father and of the Son, as well as of the Goodness of the divine nature, the Living Font of all perfection in creatures.

a. However, as the Father's perfect expression - of which He is also the Image - the Son does not communicate this generative fecundity - nor, does the Spirit communicate the spirative fecundity - these remain Personal Properties: there are not other words, sons or spirits - or personal loves. Precisely because of infinity, the divine fecundity pours out **all of itself**, so to speak, in the Only-Begotten, Most-Beloved Divine Son - and into one Holy Spirit, in the affective order. This is a truth of the faith that Jesus Christ has made clear, the Apostles have handed on, and the Church has gathered and guarded as in the Athanasian Symbol. The Fathers and theologians try to illustrate this truth by means of analogies drawn from the cognoscitive and affective dimensions of life - as each human being is made to the Image and Likeness of God.

b. This Divine Love is one in nature, and triune in Persons: it is a Love that is in a most sublime manner, the most pure, indivisible, eternal. This is a Love of

Divine Good Pleasure, of benevolence and friendship - always wishing the Other/others well. This is a Love of supreme Divine Goodness, involving all the perfections and attributes of God; infinity, simplicity, eternity, unity, knowledge, truth, life, will, love, justice, mercy, providence, omnipotence, beatitude: the Love of the Divine Persons communicating in nature and distinct but not divided by the distinct Personal Relationships. This is a Love that remains above and beyond all imperfection, both subjective as well as objective - without egoism, passion, or coldness. This is a Love that of necessity flows from, tends toward the Divine Goodness.

c. The Persons who communicate this love have it extend into possible creations - but, is most liberal in the realities called into existence. This is an eternal love, and remains always most free and merciful in its predilection and predestination towards spiritual creatures. It is divine Love that communicates the life of grace in time, and the life of glory through all eternity.

d. The Sign of the Cross - the Symbol of the Sacred Heart - offer a source of prolific, fertile contemplation throughout the long centuries of the Church on the inner nature of God. This is not meant to be any mere sentimentality, but a contemplation that is inspired by the most pure faith and hope, leading to its legitimate expression in love toward God, toward one's neighbors. St. Catherine of Siena refers to the "pupil of the most holy faith".

Summary

[1] It is this eternal Love that decided to share itself: Let us make humanity to our own image and likeness [cf. Gn 1:26]. It is this eternal Love that "convinced" the three Divine persons after the fall, to choose from the tribe of Abraham, a People for Himself as His most beloved: "... I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant in my affection for you. [cf. Jr 31:3]. The Holy Cross and the Sacred Heart of Jesus are offered as commemorative signs of such well ordered, super-abundant divine love.

[2] The Eternal Love of the Three Divine Persons is the supreme source of creation, redemption, sanctification. The Trinity is the Font of the maximum effusion of life and goodness, of grace and glory. A kind of commemorative sign of all this remain the Cross, the Stigmata, the Sacred Heart. Contemplating by remembering the Crucified, the Love of the Most August Trinity seems to have inspired these words of St. Paul: "...Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - who has blessed us with the spiritual blessings of heaven - before the world was made, He chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless In Him we were claimed as God's own under the predetermined plan of the one who guides all things - you have been

stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise, the pledge of our inheritance.." [cf. Ep 1:3-14 - read all!].

3. The Symbolism of the Sacred Heart in Relation to the Love of the Trinity *Ad Extra* [Creation, Redemption, Sanctification]

1. Good Friday, preceded by the drama of Gethsemane, profoundly changed the entire course of the revelation of Mercy in the messianic mission of Jesus Christ. It almost seems as though Jesus Himself, in His helplessness, is pleading for mercy, dying in agony He truly merited mercy from those He did so much good - those closest to Him were unable, unwilling, to do their part. Yet, there is a fulfillment here of Isaiah's amazing prophecy: through His wounds, ours will be healed.

a. In His personal agony of Gethsemane which then culminates on Calvary, Jesus addresses His heavenly Father. In this terrible "legal fiction" God made the sinless one sin in order to free us [cf. 2 Co 5:21]. Redemption, then, in this drastic manner, is the ultimate and definitive revelation of the Holiness of God: a debt had to be paid, but love is supreme.

b. In the passion and death of Jesus Christ, the Father did not spare His only Son, but offered Him up for our salvation [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16] - Jesus pays a superabundant price for the sins of the world. The divine dimension of redemption is put into effect not only by paying the just price for sin - but also by dominating justice by love. Thus, redemption is the revelation of mercy in its fullness.

2. The Paschal Mystery is the culmination of the revelation and realization of Divine Mercy. This suffering Christ, through the centuries, has had an eloquence that crosses confessional lines -- Jesus Christ is certainly one of the "paradigmatic personalities" of the human scene His solidarity with the "least" is for the believer a divine expression of infinite mercy and compassion - His "disinterested", self-less dedication to the human cause is one to truth and goodness. The final place of prayer in Jesus' earthly sojourn was the cross - and here the discourse emerges from the depths of His Sacred Heart. The love of God prayed on Calvary for humanity reveals the ultimate source of the power behind Creation, Salvation, Sanctification. This is divine love that has not only created good, but grants participation in God's very life: **creation is unto eternal life**.

3. Such mercy asks for a response: the Cross on Calvary is an expression of that wondrous exchange, that **sublime self-giving of God** to human beings. This self-

giving, however, on the part of God includes the appeal addressed to every human being to share in the divine life by imitating it. As adopted children, believers in particular - through the sacraments of initiation - share in the truth and goodness of God. In this life-long effort to make something out of life, each believer knows that Divine Election and the Cross of Calvary, of necessity intertwine. The Cross is the ultimate divine expression of the Covenant of Divine Mercy with humanity. This Covenant is the power behind Creation - God created out of mercy - in Redemption, this Covenant of Mercy has been renewed many times. We now live this New and Everlasting Covenant, unto the remission of sins. It is being offered to each and every human being.

4. The **Paschal Mystery** is the ultimate expression of Divine Mercy - and this is sublimely **summarized in the Sacred Heart**. The challenging words to the first to reach the tomb - who were women - and for the first time this message was heard in the Church: He is risen! This message will run throughout the world - and to this day, many believe it - still put their lives on the line because of it - strive to overcome the struggles, failures of life, through it. Yet, in all the subsequent glory, the **Cross, the Pierced Side of Jesus - the Sacred Heart** - still proclaim the love and mercy of God the Father - the total Self-giving of God the Son - the continual in-spirations, a-spirations of God the Spirit. To believe in the Paschal Mystery, the Sacred Heart - is to see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Love is still present in our world - despite its apparent defeat: goodness, purity, peace, are still here, striving to push through the hard crust of our times. Believing all this, means to believe in Mercy. Mercy is indispensable to love - this is the specific manifestation that the infinitely powerful love of God seeks to take root in our world, and ever more deeply in our hearts. [cf. **DM # 7**].

5. The human heart is the source of relationships with others - in consecration, the human heart seeks to transcend itself by making a sacrificial offering to the heart of the beloved. In consecrations, religious minded Israel expressed their will to make a return to the love of the Creator. When uncreated Love is neglected, outraged, those who love God are moved to make a response.

a. All that God has done outside of Himself remains common to all three Divine Persons. The Trinity, therefore, is behind, within, the order of creation, earthly government, and divine providence - seeking to provide favorable circumstances for the ultimate, the only genuinely satisfying, happiness for human beings - an eternal beatitude .

b. While certain Trinitarian activities can be "appropriated" to one, or other of the Divine Persons, this is due to the fact that some of these effects bear a greater similarity to Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. The essential attributes of God - such as power, wisdom or goodness - as well as particular operations - such as creation,

redemption, sanctification - might appear to pertain to one, or other of the Divine Persons, because of this similarity with Their personal properties. These are traditionally called “appropriations.” These seem to find their origins in the personal properties of the three Divine Persons: paternity, filiation, passive spiration. This doctrine is called “Appropriations”. As a result, the relationship that exists between the Divine Persons and the exterior works included in the divine plan are preferentially assigned to one or other of the Persons. This has long seemed more fitting because of the personal characteristics with which these works have their own clear reference or analogy. The Sacred Heart pertains personally, more properly to the Divine Son - as the only Person of the Trinity to have been incarnate.

7. However, notwithstanding this doctrine of ‘Appropriations’, and personal attribution, which has a solid foundation in Sacred Scripture, and its repeated support among the Fathers of the Church, it is beyond all doubt that every work of God “ad extra”, are shared in by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in accord with their personal relationships one with the other, and because of a clear “concomitance”.. In this sense, the Scriptures will say: the Lord has placed His Heart on you [cf. Dt 7:7] - that David would be a king in accord with the heart of God [cf. I S 13:14].

a. Faith grasps something of the Divine Love, as most free, most fair, and most merciful - one that is ordered, supported, permeated with the Infinite Goodness and Wisdom of God. Mercy permeates the omnipotence of the Creator, and constantly accompanies the conserving and providing love of the Initiator of all that is. It is the most fundamental trait in the Self-giving Redeemer - and the Self-sharing Holy Spirit. This infinite mercy permeates the Love of the three Divine Persons, in the Power, Knowledge, and Love, according to that manner most proper to each one. To create, to redeem, to sanctify - are not properties of one, or other of the Divine Persons but the sharing of the goodness and wisdom of each. All three Divine Persons have a direct causal influence in Creation, Redemption and the Sanctification of the world - all on-going processes.

b. With special emphasis on the “**New Creation**”, the work of **salvation** and **redemption**, all Three Divine Persons have cooperated as the First Efficient Cause. Thanks to their common attributes of Power, Knowledge, Love, and Wisdom, all three Persons are present in the Re-creation of the world. Their redemptive love for humanity is common, identical in all three Persons. This merciful love has as its goal that of lifting up mortally wounded humanity, liberating humanity from perpetual slavery, finding human beings who are hopelessly lost. The loving mercy behind the redemption of the world is a Trinitarian love, an expression of what is deepest to God. In some mysterious way, loving mercy is identical to the divine nature. This is what God “is” - a God of compassion and kindness, slow to anger, rich in kindness... [cf. Ex 34:6].

c. The worship rendered to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is ultimately identified with the worship rendered to the Most Blessed Trinity - and is a human response to the love of the three Divine Persons for humanity, that has initiated the Divine Plan of Eternal Blessedness. The Love within the Most August Trinity stands as the principle and at the source of all the divine benefits addressed to humanity. Trinitarian Love and Mercy motivate the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His will. The efforts at human response are chosen by God in His Plan of Providence as Secondary Causes in the government of the universe. It is this Trinitarian Love that allowed the sacred side of Jesus to be pierced by a lance - it is that same Trinitarian love and mercy that allow the groanings and cries for mercy from humanity in bondage to reach God, to penetrate His divine Heart [cf. Ex 2:21,ff.].

8. Some of the passages that would refer to God as “Father” enable us to ponder this enormous mystery of His loving heart: “... When Israel was a child, I loved him... the more I called out, the further they went away... I myself taught them how to walk; I took them in my arms... I led them with strings of kindness, with leading strings of love. I was like someone who lifts an infant close against his cheek, stooping down to him I gave him his food...” [cf. Ho 11]. Not to be outdone in any way, an unknown Psalmist has presented God to us as a Mother: “... Yahweh, my heart has no lofty ambitions; my eyes do not look too high. I am not concerned with great affairs or marvels beyond my reach. Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet, like a child in its mother’s arms, as content as a child that has been weaned. Israel, rely on Yahweh now and for always!” [cf. Ps 131].

a. In Jn’s Gospel where Jesus so emphasizes His “Father”, he speaks in eloquent terms of the Trinitarian love of Paternity, Filiation, and Spiration: “Yes, God so loved the world that He gave [up] his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but have eternal life...” [cf. Jn 3:16] This manifests to us the unique and indivisible Trinitarian Love of the Divine Persons.

b. Similar statements are attributed to St. Paul in which he exalts the infinite love of the **Self-surrendering Son**. It is clear throughout that the love of Jesus Christ for humanity is both divine as well as human. Paul shows how this filial love had permeated his own life: “... I have been crucified with Christ and I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in this body, I live in faith: faith in the Son of God who sacrificed himself for my sake. I cannot bring myself to give up God’s gift...” [cf. Ga 2:20, ff.]. “... For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone now and the new one is here. It is all God’s work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men’s faults against them and he has entrusted to us the good news that they are reconciled...” [cf. 2 Co 5:17, ff.]. “..But

when the kindness and love of God our Savior for mankind was revealed it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and renewing us in the Holy Spirit, which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our savior. He did this so that we should be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life. This is a doctrine you can rely on..." [cf. Tt 3:4, ff.].

c. The Apocalypse offers a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to this merciful love of God for us all: "... He loves us and has washed away our sins with his blood and made us a line of kings, priests, to serve his God and Father; to him, then, be glory and power forever and ever. Amen. It is he who is coming on the clouds. Everyone will see him, even those who pierced him and all the races of the earth will mourn over him..." [cf. Rv 1:5, ff.]. These lines refer to the divine love of Jesus Christ for humanity- but, through His Sacred Heart we are able to pierce the secrets of divine Mercy.

9. The cross of Christ is a witness to the power of evil - the enormous price of sin. The Cross of Christ renders full justice to the Father - but, at the same time, it is a radical revelation of mercy. This is a love that goes to the very roots of evil and defeats it there.

a. The Cross remains the most marvelous condescension of the divinity toward humanity. The cross is the touch of eternal love upon the most painful human wounds. This is the total fulfillment of the messianic program: the poor are saved, healed, elevated, lifted up to God the Father. Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This Messianic Program is the avowed purpose of merciful love for the poor, the suffering, prisoners, the blind, the oppressed and all sinners. In the Paschal Mystery, represented ably by the Sacred Heart, the limits of the multi-faceted evil are all surpassed by Jesus' sharing our human lot. The Cross teaches us the awesomeness of evil - the extent of divine Mercy.

b. The Cross is an eschatological revelation of God. In the end, Mercy will prove omnipotent - it will bring to maturity the fruit of the reign of eternal life, holiness, glorious immortality. The resurrection is the ultimate sign of the messianic mission - it promises the New Heaven, the New Earth [cf. Rv 21:1] for all, the New Creation. The Lord will indeed wipe away all tears from our eyes: no more death, no more sadness, no more separation...

c. Through the Paschal Mystery, Divine Love is revealed supremely as Mercy - this will transform all that goes under the much abused human "love" into mercy toward one another, more ready forgiveness, compassion and not violence, **self-giving** and not self-centered fulfillment as true Christian personality. Christ's

Messianic Program becomes the Mission of His Chosen People - in whose veins courses His Precious Blood, the price of our Redemption. In the center of all this, there will always be the cross - for it is on the Cross, the merciful love of God culminates toward humanity.

d. The Crucified One is the One Whose word does not pass away. As we speak, he is at the door knocking - if anyone hears his voice and opens the door, He will come in and share the bread with him/her, to be truly the **“com-panion” of this Lamb** [cf. Rv. 3:20]. In the imagery of the Sacred Heart, He is knocking at the heart of us all - the way to His heart is through His immolation: only the immolated one can ever open the scrolls of God’s Word, the secrets of His Father’s heart. Jesus’ Paschal Mystery reveals to us the mercy of the Father. Human dignity is never more ennobled than when it is the recipient of divine mercy.

e. The merciful shall obtain mercy [Mt 5:7]. This is the wonder of the Divine Plan - made to the **image** and likeness of the Creator, humanity is called to **imitate** His merciful, creative love. This is the wonderful exchange: the New Commandment is to love one another **as** Christ has loved us - with the same Trinitarian love with which the Father loves His Son. As the human soul is naturally capable of God - and the human intelligence is naturally capable of faith - and the human will is naturally capable of hope and charity: the human heart is naturally capable of being elevated to the level of the Mercy of the Sacred Heart. All this is possible, as **“nothing is impossible to God”** - there is in each creature a passive obedience, a potential “elevability”, a passive ability to be “capacitated” - in response to the Creator’s word, will. The Sacred Heart makes known to us in human symbolism that eternal, infinite unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This infinite love sets justice in motion, under the power of Mercy. As divine mercy is infinite - humanity is asked to “stretch” its response by loving even those who do not return it, reject it.

f. Whoever who has seen Him, has seen the Father [cf. Jn14:9] - Jesus did not receive human mercy on the Cross, but has revealed the Father’s ultimate concern for His adopted children by sacrificing out of mercy for them, His only-begotten Son. In His resurrection, the fullness of the divine love and mercy has been made known. In the resurrection Jesus has manifested the God of merciful love, precisely through His acceptance of the Cross as the only way to the resurrection. In the Cross, our faith and hope become centered on the Risen One - the ultimate manifestation of the divine nature. He is the perfect copy of the divine nature [cf. Heb1:1, ff.].

g. By being raised from the dead, Jesus experienced the supreme form of mercy - being called back from the effects of human sin, to a glorious life eternal as the Risen “Lord”. This has shown that the Father’s love is more powerful than death.

The Paschal Mystery has made known the inexhaustible source of divine mercy - which will always be more powerful than sin throughout the history of the church, despite appearances to the contrary. The Paschal Christ is the definitive Incarnation of Mercy - with devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Church can sing of the mercies of God forever! [cf. Ps 89[88]:2].

10. **Redemption is a New Creation** [cf. RH # 8]. This New Creation shows the prophetic value of the Creator's initial blessing on the universe: God saw that it was good and that humanity is exceedingly good! The created universe was apparently defeated by futility and the Paschal Mystery has restored the original link with the Divine Source of Wisdom and Mercy. God so loved the world, that He gave up His only Son [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16].

a. Paul had made known that the entire universe has been groaning in one great act of giving birth [cf. Rm 8:22] - the universe is waiting with eager longing. In our own age, with the marvelous aspects of human dominion over some of the aspects of the created universe - is but a "shadow", an image, of the divine dominion over our universe. In studying the immanent nature of matter, one comes to the transcendent Creator of it all. However, this world of the new age, the world of space flights, computers - still groans in travail, awaiting redemption.

b. The inward mystery of man in both biblical as well as in non-biblical language is expressed by the word "**heart**." Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is the One who has penetrated in a unique, unrepeatable way into the mystery of humanity and entered the human heart. Christ the New Adam is thus able to reveal full the heights of human dignity and sheds light on this supreme calling of each person. Jesus is the ICON of the Invisible God [cf. Col 1: 15]. The Divine Redeemer of the world - the second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity - has loved us with a **human heart** [cf. GS 22].

11. The Trinitarian Dimensions of Redemption [cf. RH # 9]: Jesus Christ, as the Only Begotten Son of the living God, became our Reconciliation. That Fatherhood from the beginning, found expression in creating the world - offering all the riches of the universe, making human beings a little less than God, the angels [cf. Ps 8:6]] - each person is created to the image and likeness of the Creator.

a. God again satisfied His Fatherhood in that love that had been rejected by the rejection of the Covenants - that again and again were offered to humanity. The redemption of the world, the restoration of the Covenant, is a tremendous mystery of love and mercy. At its deepest root, it is the fullness of Justice and Mercy in the Sacred Heart of Jesus - that offers these treasures to anyone open for them.

b. The Cross on Calvary is still another manifestation of the eternal Fatherhood of God and His loving mercy for sinful humanity - through this mystery

of the Cross, the Holy Spirit of God was “spirated” forth in Jesus’ dying, and poured forth in the opening of His Sacred Side by the soldier’s lance.

c. Thus, in a variety of ways, the Fatherhood of God repeatedly manifests itself - the God of Creation is revealed as the God of Redemption - the same symbolism [the dividing of the waters] is used in the creation story [Gn 1] as well as in the salvation story of the Sea of Reeds when the waters this time divided to the left and to the right [cf. Ex 14:q5, ff.]. His “fidelity” remains intact - even though Israel proved unfaithful.

d. Therefore, for our sake the extraordinary step of making His sinless Son to be sin, the One Who knew no sin [cf. 2 Co 5:21; cf. Ga 3:13]. This was to reveal His love which is always greater than the whole of creation- stronger than death - a love that is mercy, always ready to raise up, forgive, always ready to go out and meet the prodigal son [cf. Lk 15:11,ff.] - always searching for the revealing of the children of God [cf. Rm 8:19]. Such revelation of love also bears the name “mercy” [St. Thomas, III, q. 47, a. 1 ad 3 um]. In human history, this revelation of merciful divine love has taken human form and a name, Jesus Christ.

12. The Sacred Heart and Redemption: [cf. RH # 10]: without love, human life is senseless - this is so if human beings never participate in it. The Sacred Heart makes man better known even to him/herself. This is a human expression of the mystery of redemption. In redemption humanity finds the greatness of its inherent God-given dignity. In being saved, human beings receive new “expression” - this is a form of a New Creation.

a Anyone who would like to understand him/herself integrally, would need to draw near to Jesus and anything that would make Him known: as His Cross, His Sacred Heart - the empty tomb. The apt student, contemplator, seeking to grasp the “logic” of what human beings truly are, would need to assimilate at least the terms of the mystery of the **Redemptive Incarnation**. This process would lead eventually to the **adoration** of the Trinity, and no small wonder regarding humanity itself: “to have merited such and so great a redeemer.” God gave His only Son so that humanity could survive, enter eternal life [cf. Jn 3:16].

b. The name given to such amazement at the divinity and human reality is the “Gospel”. It is this divine Good News that determines the mission of the Church in the world. This amazement is the deepest certitude - enjoying the certitude of faith, even though it has its dark “nights”, “winters.” through the centuries, the Church contemplates, studies, experiences, heeds her own Magisterium - and continually ponders in her heart that the New Creation took place through the death on the Cross of the Second Person of the Trinity. Salvation

occurred through the Paschal Mystery, through the cross and death, the resurrection and ascension.

c. The Church's Mission through her teaching, through her devotions, is to direct the awareness and experience of the human race towards the mystery of God and His Plan, to help all to be familiar with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Jesus Christ. All this has to happen in the deepest "sphere" known to human beings, so often expressed as the human heart. In the devotion to the Sacred Heart, we have the realization of the Song of Songs [and also the motto of Cardinal Newman]: ***Cor ad Cor loquitur!***

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4. The Sacred Heart and the Divine Indwelling

1. The adorable Sacred Heart of the Redeemer has long been worshipped in the Church as the most natural symbol of the divine/human love that "moved" the Most Blessed Trinity to give us the Most Blessed Eucharist, the order of Redemption, the priesthood and the other sacraments, the Church, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, a "theological" life with the Trinity as its immediate Goal, as well as its prime Initiator.

a. Creation is the first revelation of the divine love. From the outset, there was the promise of a Redeemer once the Divine Plan had been rejected. When the wages of sin, being pain and death, took hold and brother killed brother - as the first recorded death in Scripture [cf. Gn 4] - the merciful, loving Creator promised a Redeemer and a New Creation - as well as a Life-giving Holy Spirit Who would come, as the "New Paraclete."

b. This Redemption, New Creation paradoxically took place through the out-pouring of the Most Precious Blood from the open side of Jesus Christ - His expiration of His Spirit - His breathing new life on the Apostles in **a New Creation of forgiveness and pardon**. While the drama ended tragically in human terms, it did not end fatally: the end was a new beginning - because the Son of God knowingly and willingly accepted death, even death on the Cross, for the Glory of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit [cf. Ph 2:7,ff.].

c. This work of salvation was accomplished personally by the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ, with the co-redemptive cooperation of His Mother Mary, the Mother of God. This was all accomplished by the inspiration, cooperation of the Most Blessed Trinity. Christ's "motivation" is what He received from the Trinity by His indivisible union with the Father and the Holy Spirit - even in the dark hours of His "abandonment" on the Cross [cf. Ps 22]. Jesus was inspired by the Most Blessed Trinity to die for us that we might live.

d. This redemptive Mystery is generally applied to human beings through the application of the fruits of the universal redemption. This is to happen by Divine Will, through the Sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ. These are to be received either actually, or by desire, or by blood - or, **salvation comes in ways known only to God**. [cf. CCC ## 1257; 1260; 1261 - GS 22 § 5; LG 17; AG 7]. The sacraments - and all the means of salvation are the work of the Trinity - a central symbol of Divine Love motivating all this remains the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

e. The salvation of each “believer” [either “explicit” or “implicit”] is initiated through Baptism. In addition to the indelible character [“a web of relationships”?] that it infuses, it is also a participation in the spiritual Priesthood of Jesus Christ [cf. Ex 19: 5, f.; Nb 16:3; Dt 14:2; Ps 33:12; Ws 10:15; Jr 2:3; Rv 1:5; 5:10 - cf. also Vatican II; SC 12; LG 10, 11, 12, 34; GS 43; AA 3; PO 2 a & d; cf. also CCC # 1119; 1121; 1546]. At this same ritual there are infused into the soul the inestimable share in the divine nature [cf. 2 P 1:4] of sanctifying grace, as well as the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The realization of salvation happens in the final glorification of each one in a blessed eternity: “... this perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity - this communion of life with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed - is called ‘heaven.’ Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme and definitive happiness...” [cf. CCC # 1024].

f. The salvation of individual creatures is not left up to chance - or, to human whim. It is rather the infallible fulfillment of the free choice of both God and the free acceptance of the believer, of that eternal plan which the mind and “heart” of the Most Blessed Trinity has conceived in mercy: if the Lord God has set His heart on you, it is because He has loved you [cf. Dt 7:7]: “.. We know that by turning everything to their good God cooperates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose. They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son, so that his Son might be the eldest of many brothers. He called those he intended for this; those he called he justified, and with those he justified he shared his glory ... I have mercy on whom I will, and I show pity to whom I please [cf. Ex 33:19] ... In other words, when God wants to show mercy he does - and when he wants to harden someone’s heart, he does so.” [cf. Rm 8:28-30; 9:16, 18].

2. The Church works for the salvation of each and everyone - there is no one unimportant to her. There is no such reality as a “Church of Charity” and one of “Law” - a Church of John/ and one of Peter - a “charismatic” Church/ and an “institutional Church - or a Church of Christ/ to be followed by one of the Spirit. There can be no opposition or repugnance between the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit and the juridical office that the Shepherds or the call the Doctors and

Doctoresses received from Jesus Christ. The sacraments are powers that come forth from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are the masterworks of God in the new and everlasting covenant [cf. CCC # 1116].

a. It is through the sacraments that believers are sanctified - the Body of Christ is built up and God is worshipped. The sacraments not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called “sacraments of the faith” [cf. CCC # 1123]. In all this, the Church continues the work of Jesus Christ and is His minister: “... But when the kindness and love of God our Savior for mankind were revealed, it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves - it was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our savior. He did this so that we would be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life. This is a doctrine you can rely on...” [cf. Tt 3:4, ff.].

b. As appears clearly from this classical text of the Apostle, in the process of the formation of the Mystical Body of Christ, as in the formation of His physical Body, Father Son and Holy Spirit play their role: “... the Angel Gabriel was sent by God... to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph... The Lord is with you, he said, You are to conceive and bear a Son ... the Son of the Most High ... The Holy Spirit will come upon you...” [cf. Lk 1:30-35]. In like manner, all Three Divine Persons concur in the salvation of each and everyone - even though Sanctification is often preferentially attributed to the Holy Spirit, as more in accord with His personal attributes. However, in all the activities “ad extra”, the works are common to all Three Divine Persons. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and/through the Son in the guise of Personal Love. The Holy Spirit comes as the First and Principal Gift that the Father can make through the Son to an intellectual creature. He gives of Himself, communicates Himself, shares the inner life of the Trinity in loving - merciful love toward creatures is always the ultimate and proper reason for every gratuitous gift.

c. The Apostle will proclaim this sublime doctrine in exultant terms: “[our] hope is not deceptive because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. We were still helpless when at the appointed moment Christ died for us...” [cf. Rm 5:5, f.]. In virtue of this great “Gift”, the Holy Spirit in Person, participated in through grace, many other gifts are appropriated and distributed to the members of Jesus Christ. There are many gifts, and one Holy Spirit.

3. Because of the eminent personal attributes of the Third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, some preference has been shown in Appropriating the Divine

Indwelling to the Holy Spirit. This is because of the eminent application of the very Personal Properties of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Nonetheless, the Divine Indwelling is the work of the entire Most Blessed Trinity. The Holy Spirit indeed is the first Gift, He is also the Soul of the Mystical Body, of which Christ is the Head. To Him is attributed the divine works of inspiration, sanctification through grace and charity - yet, all Three Divine Persons cooperate in these in equal manner, as the Efficient Cause - and the Trinity of Persons is present really, substantially, and personally in the believers and in the Church through the life of grace.

4. It is also true that as the Holy Spirit is manifest in His effects in the Visible Mission of Pentecost - in like manner, the Risen Christ carries on an invisible Mission - that has its foundation in His eternal generation in the bosom of the Father. This mission is His "Advent" in the human being, in the Church, through grace, charity and the Gift of Wisdom. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and/through the Son through His invisible Mission, reflects in time the eternal spiration that unites Him to the other two Divine Persons.

5. In the effort to reach the ultimate source of sanctification that is achieved in each one through grace and charity, in ways sometimes of which the Church knows nothing [cf. CCC # 1257] - the Church teaches: "...The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification..." [cf. CCC # 1265].

a. Without charity, that comes to humanity through God, One and Three, the mystery of holiness and the intimate life of God would have no explanation. Faith and Hope - while being theological virtues - are not enough to bring the intimate life of the Trinity within, as there is likewise needed the theological infusion of charity. The gift of grace is looked upon as an "entitative" reality, elevating the level of the human soul - this, however, needs to become "operative" through the faculties. Charity is inspired into the human will. Divine Charity transforms the human will and makes its influence also felt in hope and in faith, also in the human intelligence. This it does primarily through the Gift of Wisdom that intensifies as one lives charity.

b. This brings about the special presence of the Trinity called "Indwelling, Inhabitation". The Trinity is present in a special way in the human intelligence and will as the object of knowledge and love. In order for this sublime mystery to be "translated" to the grasp of human beings, the world of symbols plays its role - as the Cross, as the Sacred Heart.

c. This knowledge of the Indwelling is "almost experiential" - as of a reality truly present, that enables one to experience connaturally the mind and heart of God through assimilation and transformation. This insures a certain possession of truth and goodness, and with it enjoyment, joy, the foretaste of

eternal happiness. This is where service of God leads -to “friendship” with God, that lasts forever.

6. Jesus offers this response from His Last Supper with His “own”: “...If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word and my Father will love Him and we shall come to him and make our home with him...” [cf. Jn 14:23]. A few verses earlier He had already promised His Holy Spirit: “... If you love me you will keep my commandments, I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth... He is with you, He is in you...” [cf. Jn 14:15-17]. St. Paul reminded the Romans of the enormous gift of the Holy Spirit: “... the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us...” [cf. Rm 5:5].

a. From the words of our Savior it seems evident that not even intimate contact with the Father and the Son is possible for our intelligence, if our contemplation of the Truth proceeds only from abstract truth, and not from that charity towards the Three Divine Persons - and towards all those whom They love. Only charity is capable of conforming the human spirit to the Spirit of God and of rendering it capable of an intimate knowledge, one that is penetrating. Knowledge of this kind is often called by the theologians to be an “affinity”, a “connaturality” with the reality grasped by the intelligence - yearned for, or loved by the will.

b. It is necessary to keep in mind that God is charity of His very essence, being. Therefore, the Father and the Divine Word are not abstract entities - while they may be thought of as Wisdom generating and Wisdom generated, but not in some kind of abstract, arid intellectual speculation. Wisdom is a “*sapida scientia*” - it is knowledge according to the ultimate causes of reality, one that needs to accompany Charity, and to be permeated by Charity. This loving Being, Truth, Goodness, Wisdom compenetrates One Another in a Mutual Indwelling and being - distinct as Persons, they are identical in these absolute traits. The one word that assumes all of these would be “God”, the Deity.

c. It is said that one cannot love anything without first knowing it - the reverse here is likewise true: one cannot know the Trinity profoundly without loving the Three Divine Persons ardently. In order to know the Divine Persons properly and profoundly - in order to penetrate the secrets of the Father’s Loving generation of Truth - and the Father’s and the Son’s truthful, sapiential spiration of Personal Love all must be loved - and those who have offended us, forgiven. St. John penetrates these sublime truths better than anyone: “... My dear People, let us love one another, since love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Anyone who fails to love can never have known God, because God is love...We ourselves have known and put our faith in God’s love towards ourselves. God is love and anyone who lives in love lives in God and God lives in him...” [cf. I Jn 4:7, f., 16].

d. St. Augustine - among all the Fathers of the Church - is one who pondered the Trinity as deeply as anyone, and more profoundly than most. He maintained that it is possible to come to some understanding of the terms of the invisible mission of the Son in the knowledge and perception of His origin from the Father. One has deep contact with the invisible mission of the Son when this is somewhat known and perceived. This cannot be some kind of purely theoretical, abstract knowledge. It seems more to have been rather some kind of “sapiential experience” of the Trinity - as Vatican II challenges all believers to grow in the faith, which can only be achieved by: contemplation, study, experience of the revealed truth, heeding the Magisterium [cf. DV 8]. This is founded, for the great Doctor, in that intimate similarity between the subject knowing and the known subject in the act of understanding. Love cannot be extraneous to all this: The Word, that we strive to grasp in faith, is the knowledge of love.

7. In the light of these reflections of St. Augustine, St. Thomas pondered the intimate, indivisible tie that exists between the presence of the Father in the soul in the state of grace and of charity - between the invisible mission of the Son and love for Him and for the Father. The production of grace pertains also to the Father - Who by grace indwells within us as do the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son indeed is the “Word” but He is not just any kind of Word, but a Personal Word Who spirates Love. Therefore, the Son is not sent for just any kind of a perfecting of the intellect - but only for that instruction from which love bursts forth. This is a unique perception, called “experiential knowledge, properly called by the theologians to be a “sweet knowledge: - a knowledge that is sublimely delightful.

8. As for the Inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the just, this is the effect of the invisible mission spirating from the Father through the Son. Theology teaches the intimate bond between grace and charity: the former is entitative, and the latter is operative - but always co-exist. These are proper to the Third Person.

a. St. Thomas has taught that the soul through grace becomes in conformity to God. Therefore, in order for it to be said that one Divine Person is sent by grace to a creature, it is necessary that this creature by some gift of grace become similar, connatural to the Divine Person Who has been sent. Since the Holy Spirit is love, through the mediation of Charity, the human soul becomes similar to Him: therefore, in the reality of Charity one receives the Mission of the Holy Spirit.

b. Without charity, there is no hope for one even to think of living a share in the intimate life of God. Through charity, it becomes “second nature”, as it were - “connatural”. One rejoices in the access to the secrets also of the knowledge of God, which culminates in the Eternal Generation of the Word of God from Whom Personal Love spirates. Charity is the love of God, Whose God is immutable - it is goodness itself. By the very fact that God is loved, God finds Himself in one who

loves with the most noble of His effects, according to what St. John teaches: "... anyone who lives in love lives in God and God lives in him..." [cf. I Jn 4:16].

c. In fact, even though the generation of the Word is considered an Intellectual Procession, it necessarily presupposes the essential Love within God. Being identified with the Divine Nature, as is Truth, Goodness, Wisdom - all of this is at the very source [even if "remote"] of all activity "ad intra."

d. The eternal generation of the Divine Word is one that flows from the spontaneous, eternally loving Will of God. Due to this mutual influence of Truth and Goodness, mind and "heart" in God, the terms of the mystery of the Trinity can only be even "stuttered" when one strives to contemplate out of love, through the medium of the Gift of the Holy Spirit, of Wisdom. The Divine Son is a reflection of the glory of God, and perfect copy of His substance, an emanation of His very Being of Truth and Love [cf. Heb 1:1, ff.]. These sublime thoughts of later theological reflection seem to be already hinted at in the extraordinary Prologue to Jn's Gospel - as well as in Paul's equally famous "Prologue" to his Epistle to the Ephesians.

Summary: The **wounded side of Christ** enables the believer to contemplate the scrolls unrolled by the Immolated Lamb:

"...Is there anyone worthy to open the scroll and break the seals of it? But there was no one, in heaven or on earth or under the earth, who was able to open the scroll and read it... Then I saw a Lamb that seems to have been sacrificed ... The [Seven Spirits of God] sang a new hymn: "... You are worthy to take the scroll and brake the seals of it because you were sacrificed, and with your blood you bought men for God, of every race, language, people and nation, and made them a line of kings and priests to serve our God and to rule the earth..." [cf. Rv 5:1, ff.].

The Wounded Side opens for the contemplation of the Church the Sacred Heart of Jesus - this imagery enables the contemplative believer to ponder the wealth of the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity. From pondering on the Trinity in itself, faith leads the believer to reflect on this august Trinitarian presence within each and everyone. The Divine Indwelling of the Trinity is the culminating reality of the life of grace.

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5. The Sacred Heart and Eschatology

1. The Sacred Heart not only commemorates what was done long ago - as a manifestation of the eternal love of God, One and Triune - to Whom is due the plan of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. Nor is the Heart of Jesus simply a “commemoration” of the wonders of the created universe - the splendor of the new creation of salvation - nor simply the beauty of the interior life of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. The “Heart” of God certainly is behind the centuries and generation upon generations of preparation for universal redemption worked by Jesus Christ in the fullness of time, and the sending of the Holy Spirit of Love, the “New” Advocate for humanity. It would not be enough either to think of the Sacred Heart as the Church’s preferred “demonstrative” sign of the Divine Love dwelling within the hearts and minds of human beings. The Trinity dwells in each individual through sanctifying grace, Christian charity and the Gift of Wisdom

2. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is also an indication of the glorifying Divine Love of the elect for a future life. Therefore, the Sacred Heart is a demonstrative sign of that reward of which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it ever entered into the hearts of human beings what it is that God has in store for them [cf. I Co 2:9- from Is 64:3; Jr 3:16]. The sacramental graces that are poured into the believer are also a kind of “prognosis” of the life ahead that will know no end. Sacramental grace, in this sense, is a hope for eternal life. In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem, toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God...” [cf. CCC # 1090]. “The vocation to eternal life is supernatural. It depends entirely on God’s gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature.” [cf. CCC # 1998].

a. Paul offers a glimpse of the great Plan of Loving Providence offered by God: “... We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him, with all those he has called according to his purpose. They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son so that his Son might be called the eldest of many brothers [and sisters]...” [cf. Rm 8:28, ff.].

b. This Plan does not “exhaust” itself in this world: “... with those he justified, God shared his own glory...” [v. 30]. This is the ultimate expression of Divine Love - this is the supreme mercy that of glorification, confirmation in grace, eternal justification. This is never given for merits alone - but, is the expression of the superabundant effusion of grace, mercy and love - that renders lowly humanity eternally inseparable from the Trinity: “... Nothing, therefore, can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or attacked ...these are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us. For I am certain of

this: that neither life, nor death, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord..." [cf. Rm 8:35, ff.].

3. The superabundant Love within the Trinity - "yearning" to offer glorification to believers is ably represented, manifested by the Sacred Heart of Jesus. All those who share in the divine nature [cf. 2 P 1:4], those who share in the Eternal Love and Mercy of the Trinity are invited through life to express this "devotion" by "imitation by accepting pardon, by extending His mercy through forgiveness of others."

a. The promise of an eternal union with God has inspired the Church through the centuries: "... Now we are seeing a dim reflection as in a mirror - but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I now have is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known..." [cf. 1 Co 13:12]. The promise of eternal glory is simply the promise of a fulfilled friendship, filiation that God makes to those who remain devoted, imitating His forgiving love. The state of glory is nothing more than the perfect flowering of present grace, deposited in us through the sacraments, infused in us by the Holy Spirit. It is in this way that we have our initial contact with the Trinity.

b. The face to face vision, contact with the Trinity is reserved for eternity - this presupposes the gradual assimilation of divine grace by responding to the daily challenges of life. In this adherence and eventual assimilation with the Trinity is the core of eternity: "... For [us], this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation and of which the pilgrim Church has been in the nature of sacrament. Those who are united with Christ will form the community of the redeemed, the holy city of God, the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. She will not be wounded any longer by sin, stains, self-love, that destroy or wound the earthly community. The beatific vision in which God opens himself in an inexhaustible way to the elect will be the ever flowing well-spring of happiness, peace and mutual communion" [cf. CCC # 1045].

c. Thanks to this beatific vision, the "ideal" identity and "affective" assimilation of the believer to the Most Blessed Trinity perfects the human intelligence and wills of the elect, by bestowing upon them the only satisfying objects of their life-long quest. In this glorified adherence and assimilation, there will be a kind of fusion of minds and hearts with the Trinitarian Mystery of life and glory. In the end, the infinite mercy of the Trinity will be enthroned in the human heart - in response to the out-pouring of the Sacred Heart.

d. Again, it is St. John who offers us a deeper appreciation of that ultimate transfiguration and shared in divinization, the fruit of the believers' life-

long effort to live merciful charity in correspondence to His superabundant grace: "...Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refuses to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My dear people, we are **already** the children of God but what we are to be in the future has **not yet** been revealed; all we know is that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is..." [cf. I Jn 4:1, ff.].

e. The new Catechism holds out this hope:"... Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below. Then, we shall see God 'face to face', 'as he is.' So faith is already the beginning of eternal life. [cf. CCC # 163]. "... Desire for true happiness frees one from immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that each one can find fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. The promise of seeing God surpasses all beatitude... In Scripture, to see is to possess... Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive..." [cf. CCC# 2548]. "...There will true glory be where no one will be praised by mistake or flattery; true honor will not be refused to the worthy, nor granted to the unworthy; likewise no one unworthy will pretend to be worthy, where only those who are worthy will be admitted. There true peace will reign, where no one will experience opposition either from self or others. God himself will be virtue's reward; he gives virtue and has promised to give himself as the best and greatest reward that could exist ... I shall be their God, and they shall be my people... This is also the meaning of the Apostle's words: So that God may be all in all. God himself will be the goal for our desires, we shall contemplate him without end, love him without surfeit, praise him without weariness. This gift, this state, this act, like eternal life itself, will assuredly be common to all..." [St. Augustine quoted by CCC # 2550].

4. St. Thomas invites us to admire, to adore and to follow the Persons in the Trinity - especially the Father and the Son, sent into this world with visible/invisible missions. The Trinity is present in the souls of the just through sanctifying grace, charity and wisdom. These become "Causes" of our response and not only Models of our response - they lead us to intensify our response to grace, to charity to wisdom, to configure ourselves, to cooperate the more with the process of "connaturality", to be more and more assimilated by the Trinity in the hopes of reaching an eternal goal.

a. This process of assimilation to the divine nature and to the eternal processions of the word and the Holy Spirit gradually achieves maturation in the very being of the human soul, as well as permeating each person's intellect and will in proportion to the gradual development of grace, the intensification of charity, and the more intelligent and loving use of Wisdom. These are the divine realities that

will remain forever - while faith and hope, and all the charisms described for St. Paul, will cease to function on the entrance into Paradise.

b. St. Paul puts it this way: "... Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or the gift of languages, it will not continue forever; and knowledge - for this, too, the time will come when it must fail. Our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfection will disappear...." [cf. I Co 13:8, f.].

c. The permanence of grace, charity and wisdom in the soul establishes a unity with the Trinity - there is a co/an in-habitation in a communion of thought, a connaturality of yearning, all of which is a substantial similarity with which

1.] "... For indeed we are not ignorant of the fact of this profound truth - of our union with the Divine Redeemer and in particular of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our souls - is shrouded in darkness by many a veil that impedes our power to understand and explain it, both because of the hidden nature of the doctrine itself, and of the limitations of our human intellect. But, We know, too, that from well-directed and earnest study of this doctrine, and from the clash of diverse opinions and the discussion thereof, provided that these are regulated by the love of truth and y due submission to the Church, much light will be gained which, in its turn, will help into progress in kindred sacred sciences.

2.] "Hence, We do not censure those who, in various ways, and with diverse reasonings make every effort to understand and to clarify the mystery of this our wonderful union with Christ. But let all agree uncomprisingly on this, if they would not err from truth and from the orthodox teaching of the Church to reject every kind of mystic union by which the faithful of Christ should in any way pass beyond the sphere of creatures and wrongly enter the divine, were it only to the extent of appropriating to themselves as their own but one single attribute of the eternal Godhead. And, moreover, let all hold this as certain truth that all these activities are common to the most Blessed Trinity insofar as they have God as their supreme efficient Cause.

3.] "It must be born in mind that there is question here of a hidden mystery, which during this earthly exile can only be dimly seen through a veil, and which no human words can express. The Divine Persons are said to indwell inasmuch as they are present to beings endowed with intelligence in a way that lies beyond human comprehension, and in a unique and very intimate manner, which transcends all created nature, these creatures enter into relationship with Them through knowledge and love. If we would attain in some measure to a clearer perception of this truth, let us not neglect the method recommended strongly by

the [1st] Vatican Council in similar cases, by which these mysteries are compared one with another and with the end to which they are directed, so that in the light which this comparison throws on them we are able to discern, at least partially, the hidden things of God.

4.] “Therefore, Our most learned predecessor, Leo XIII, of happy memory, speaking of our union with Christ and with the Divine Paraclete, who dwells within us, and fixing his gaze on that blessed vision through which this mystical union will attain its confirmation and perfection in heaven says: ‘This wonderful union, or indwelling properly so called, differs from that by which God embraces and gives joy to the elect only by reason of our earthly state.’ In that celestial vision it will be granted to the eyes of the human mind strengthened by the light of glory, to contemplate the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in an utterly ineffable manner, to assist throughout eternity at the processions of the Divine Persons and to rejoice with a happiness like to that with which the holy and undivided Trinity is happy... [cf. Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, # 78-80, p. 47, and ff.].

d. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the symbol of the Eternal Love and Mercy of the Trinity. In this symbol, the believer can ponder the History of Salvation. For generations, this brings with it a singular comfort, consolation, and challenge.

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6. The Sacred Heart and Missionary Spirituality

1. The first aspect of any spirituality - and certainly Missionary spirituality [cf. RM # 87] - is to be docile to the Holy Spirit. Docility enables the believer to be molded from within, that we might become more and more Christ-like. To reflect Christ, it is necessary to have this - it comes alive by the power of grace, charity and the Gift of Wisdom. This docility then imparts Fortitude, Discernment, Understanding, Knowledge.

a. The Apostles are the outstanding examples - even though they often appeared unable to understand Him, and reluctant to follow Him, particularly in carrying out the Father’s Plan through Gethsemane and Calvary - where they fled, denied and cursed Him. Despite it all, the Son’s forgiveness, and the Spirit’s transformation made them persevering and courageous in their witness even to martyrdom.

b. Today’s apostolic mission is extremely difficult - the Mission today needs that apostolic creativity, boldness, and gentleness. The Missionary needs to ponder the ways of the Spirit in imitating the Son to fulfill the Father’s Plan of Mercy.

2. An essential characteristic of missionary spirituality is intimate communion with Christ [cf. RM # 88]: all needs to be carried out in relation to Jesus Christ, Who was sent by His Father to evangelize: it is His Mission that the Church continues. It is necessary **to have the “mind” of Christ Jesus** - to feel what He “felt” within Himself - to have His “sentiments” , “attitude” [cf. Ph 2:5].

a. The Mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption is described as a **total self-emptying [kenosis]**. By His, Christ experienced fully the human condition in His total acceptance of the Father’s Plan. This is an emptying of self which is permeated by love and expresses love. The apostolic mission follows this same path and leads to the foot of the Cross.

b. It is precisely because he/she is “sent” that every missionary may experience the consoling presence of Jesus. The message is: **Do not be afraid - I am with you** [cf. Ac 18:9.f.].

c. Missionaries need to reflection the duty of holiness that is required of them by their missionary vocation - renew themselves in spirit day by day, and strive to live the old slogan: “contemplatives in action.” The Missionary finds answers to problems and challenges in the light of God’s Word, and in personal and shared prayer. [cf. RM # 91].

2. Sayings such as: *putting one’s “heart” in his/her work - he/she has a lot of “heart”* - make us understand even on the natural level the suitability of having the Sacred Heart as the symbol of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ in His Holy Spirit. Even to list all the benefits of this Divine Self-giving would be a challenge - and all is summarized in the Sacred Heart: the Unity and Trinity of God; the Paschal Mystery; the Sacraments [particularly the Eucharist, THE Most Blessed Sacrament]; the Gift of Eternal life; the Blessed Mother and the Saints: all are expressions of the Infinite love and mercy of God.

a. Even in the careful Thomistic theology of presenting the generation of the Word as intellectual - and the Spiration of the Spirit as affective: has no difficulty with the symbolism of the Sacred Heart. Primarily, of course, this is because only the Second Person of the Trinity became “incarnate”.

1.] It is true that Christ, in the strength of His divinity, is the Logos, the Wisdom of the Father. His coming into our world is a visible mission - and theologically is simply a continuation, revelation, manifestation of his immanent Trinitarian procession. The Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, in becoming incarnate, is above all a visible manifestation of Wisdom - often thought of as more “intellectual” than “affective.”

2.] The Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is the Embrace of Charity. Therefore, the Mission of the Holy Spirit in our world is usually associated with the coming of divine love, inspiration, revelation, sanctification. This still would not make of the Sacred Heart devotion in any way, out of harmony with the classical Trinitarian theology.

b. Beginning with Jesus' humanity, it is clear that He has come essentially as a Mediator. He has not come "on His own", but to bear the Father's message. All devotion in this sense is in the Holy Spirit, through Christ, toward the Father. Devotion to the Sacred Heart does not terminate in His Person - but, by concomitance, and consubstantiality, Jesus is God, sharing divine Wisdom, Love and Mercy with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus' human heart is also the symbol of Trinitarian love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is one to the image and symbol of the Trinitarian love - hence, it is a devotion that is essentially "**relative**" - in relation to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In technical terms, the Redeemer's Sacred Heart is first of all an object of worship of **absolute "latria"**, like all the aspects of the humanity of the Incarnate Word: the Body and Blood of the Lord.

c. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, which is the symbol of the Divine Love, tends to be concentrated in the Eternal Love of all three Divine Persons, on the force of that well known principle enunciated by St. Thomas Aquinas: anything that is directed toward the Image, in so far as it is an image, does not terminate in the image, but rather in what the image represents. [cf. II, q.81, a. 3, ad 3^{um}.] . In this sense, "image" and dogmatic formulations have at least one aspect in common: they refer more to the reality they express, than to themselves: Faith is more in the reality than in the statement that strives to express it. The worship that is rendered to the Sacred Heart has as its term the Divine Person of the Incarnate Word of God - and concomitantly, the other two Persons of the Trinity. What they share in their essence is the uncreated divine love in common. Through the centuries, many have found the devotion to the Sacred Heart to be a kind of "mystical ladder", the most sure and direct access to the very core of the being of God, which is merciful love.

3. Jesus Christ is the Wisdom of the Father, the Incarnate Word of God. He is not just any kind of "word" - but, He is a Divine Word, perfect expression of the Father, spirating a Perfect, Personal Love. The Incarnate Word had a human heart, one that was sensitive, most tender, and supremely worthy of being assumed as a natural symbol of the divine, Trinitarian Love and Mercy.

a. In like manner, Jesus Christ is also Mediator. His Heart enjoys a special symbolism - perhaps right after the reality of His Flesh and Blood, symbolized through bread and wine. The Sacred Heart does not draw to itself, but refers the devout to the deeper truth it symbolizes. The divine perfections are what arouse the greatest love, devotion and imitation. God is indeed worthy of being loved beyond

all else. However, the weakness of the human being needs urging, a spur now and then in its quest for the Lord.

b. The mind is darkened and can be much helped by symbolism, as the ICONS - in order to penetrate the mystery of the Living God. Human beings need to be conducted to the heights and the depths of the divine mystery. As in the natural order, scientists are invited to study the immanent nature of inert matter - and to rise up to the transcendent Creator of all reality. So, through symbols, formulations, art - the human mind and heart go up to God.

c. In the Sacred Heart devotion, God is worshipped in an visible form, and the faithful are raised up by Him to the love of the Invisible God. The humanity of Jesus has made art, the sacraments possible - these both cause as well as inspire devotion to the highest levels as the history of the Church has proven. The sacred humanity in general serves as a guide that takes the devout by the hand - devotion takes this lead and penetrates as far as is possible into the divine perfections. The Sacred Heart leads to the contemplation, study, experience of the Divine Love and Mercy, under the guidance of the Magisterium [cf. DV 8].

4. The Cross - the Sacred Heart - other aspects of His sacred humanity, as the Precious Blood - lead to the love of the Incarnate Word of the Father, in the Holy Spirit - under a variety of titles, prerogatives, aspects of His revealed Mystery. Jesus Christ is worshipped in the hearts of believers - in religious communities, groups within the Church, bringing honor on the part of men and women to His Person. All this is looking into the mystery of the divinity as in a mirror and in darkness. Due to Christ's union within the Trinity as the Only-begotten, most beloved Son of the Heavenly Father, born in time of the Immaculate Virgin - He remains the splendor of the Father, and the perfect copy of the Divinity [cf. Heb 1:1,ff.].

a. He is the Image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation. the Church is His Body, he is its head ... As he is the Beginning, he is the first to be born from the dead so that he should be first in every ay... God wanted all perfection to be found in him and for him ... all things are to be reconciled through and for him, everything in heaven and everything on earth - when he made peace by his death on the cross..." [cf. Col 1:15-20].

b. To have seen him, is to have seen the Father [cf. Jn 14:9].Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent... Now Father, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was made. [cf. Jn 17:3, ff.].

c. The Church has approved a wide variety of devotions to the many aspects of the mystery associated with the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. Throughout the long history of the Church, such devotions as to the Most Precious

Blood, the Holy Cross, the Sacred Stigmata - along with that of the Sacred Heart - have led believers to a more intense theological life and a deeper reflection on the Word of God and the Spirit guided and protected Tradition in the Church.

d. As part of the “marvelous condescension” on the part of God, there has been clear evidence throughout the history of divine revelation of a kind of on-going tendency of “incarnation”, “inculturation”. God speaks in human terms to His people, using images [anthropomorphisms/ anthropopathisms], metaphors to describe the inner mystery of the Trinity and the Plan of Redemption. The gifted doctors/doctoresses of the Church, as well as simple believers, have all come to God through ordinary images as well as through sublime concepts and formulations.

e. In the Devotion to the Sacred Heart - and perhaps the less well known devotion to the Sacred Stigmata - the Lord has opened up the secret chambers of His interior life in order to invite His chosen Spouse there, as noted in the Song of Songs. The delight of the Lord is to be with His children. God truly has given His heart to His beloved - has “set” His heart on them in a unique manner. In return, He would like space to indwell the human heart. The Lord has done this to draw us into the Trinitarian life - forever!

f. This devotion is a help to **respond to the First Commandment** and simultaneously to live more deeply the Second. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the challenges of the First Commandment are presented to us in this way: “Him only shall you serve!” [cf. CCC ## 2095-2109]:

- Faith Hope and Charity are to inform all the moral virtues, including the virtue of “religion”, what we owe God in justice;
- adoration is the first duty of the virtue of religion - we need to acknowledge God as Creator, Savior, Sanctifier - Him only shall we serve! [cf. Dt 6:4, ff.].
- prayer of lifting up our minds and hearts to God - praise, thanksgiving, intercession, petition. It is indispensable to respond to the Lord’s challenge: Pray always and not lose heart [cf. Lk 18:1].
- sacrifice is offered as a sign of adoration, gratitude, supplication, communion. In order to be genuine, outward sacrifice needs to be the expression of interior, spiritual sacrifice. The only perfect sacrifice is the one that Jesus offered from the cross, as a total offering to the Father’s love and for our salvation. We are called to be united to that one perfect sacrifice.
- promises and vows: whether those of the sacraments, or the formal vow of Holy Orders, consecrated life - these are acts of devotion in which the Christian dedicates to God some good work.

- social duties: the duty of offering god authentic worship concerns humanity both as individuals and as social entities. The social duty of Christians is to respect and awaken in each person the love of genuine good.

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7. The Sacred Heart and Mercy

Premise

[1] In the Gospel of Mt, there is the magnificent Sermon on the Mount with its eight Beatitudes - presented as being held on the Mount of the Beatitudes, over the Lake of Tiberiades. These positive precepts close with the Law of Holiness: ***Be perfect, because your Heavenly Father is perfect!*** [cf. Mt 5:48].

[2] St. Thomas attributes the more perfect acts to be of those virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit: ***"Blessed are the merciful, for they will find mercy."*** Luke does not have this one in his presentation of the Sermon on the Plains [cf. 6:20-22] - which, for some interpreters is surprising, as he is thought of as the Evangelist of Mercy. Luke truly is the "Scribe of the Gentleness of Christ". In his Prologue he tells us that he investigated everything with great diligence so that he would know the certitude of those matters that were being taught.

[3] However, St. Luke will "redeem" himself a bit further on and shows that he has not forgotten such a consoling beatitude. He has received the place of distinction among the precepts of charity, offering this phrase as the crown to the Discourse of the Beatitudes: "... Instead love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward and you will be the children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ***Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate...*** [cf. Lk 6:35, f.].

[4] The great reward promised to those who imitate the Mercy of the Heavenly Father can only be that beatitude will be given to them forever, "... give and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured on your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount that you will be given back!" [cf. Lk 6:38] - this is put in positive terms what is already posited as a principle in the Lord's prayer: "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive one another..."

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1. The Heavenly Father is the Sublime Paradigm, Model, Exemplary Cause of Mercy:

a. Mercy is Indeed one of the "Virtues", Attributes of God:

1.] Inviting us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect Jesus has attributed to God the reflection of all virtue. With St. Luke, Jesus commands us to imitate the Father's Mercy, His Divine Compassion. In so doing, "perfection" and "mercy" seem to be equivalent terms - or, at least, as "perfection" is the summary of all virtue, "mercy" seems to be the summary of all "Divine Perfection."

2.] Admittedly, there is no way that theology can gauge Infinite Perfection - but, the challenge does remain to imitate with the inner help of grace, charity and Wisdom the Father's virtues, His attributes, to the extent of becoming ever more worthy sons/daughters of His.

3.] Theology can rightly ponder: whether it is really true that the Father is merciful, and in the supreme degree. Some would simply set this aside as an "anthropopathism", a certain metaphorical manner of speaking about God - as when we speak of the divine wrath, regret, repentance, wonder. Reading the OT, we see so many of these anthropopathisms interwoven that for some, they have only a metaphorical value. There are other great biblical scholars, though, who have greatly developed the Divine PATHOS [cf. Abraham HESCHEL, *The Prophets*, Part II, NY: Harper Colophon Books 1975, which speaks of "The Theology of Pathos" - "The Philosophy of Pathos" - "Anthropopathy"].

4.] Theologians have distinguished in human mercy a certain sensible affection of compassion for the physical or moral wretchedness of someone else: the symbol of this is the "heart" [as, one's "heart" was moved; have a "heart"]. But, there is also the spiritual affection which is proper to the will. The first of these two qualities is a passion, a sentiment, which would not be attributed to God, as He is a most pure spirit - it can only apply as a distant metaphor.

5.] However, the second quality noted above - the spiritual affection, pertaining to the will. This is an act, a perfection, that cannot be lacking in God, He who is Pure Act, He Who is Love [cf. I Jn 4:8, 16]. Not only is "Mercy" present in God, but it has to be there in an eminent degree - having some similarity, and an infinite distance from the mercy found among human beings. There has to be some "analogy" of human mercy in God - or put better, whatever mercy may be found among humans is but a "shadow" of the Infinite Mercy of God.

6.] St. Thomas was hesitant in applying mercy's characteristic of some "sadness" over the plight of others and holding that this could be in God in any "proper" manner [cf. *CG I*, c. 92]. In his more mature "*Summa*", he was able to note what he called the merely "accessory element" of mercy from its essential components. He saw mercy as a special affection of charity, and included Mercy among the divine perfections. He wrote that God shows mercy only in so far as He loves us as something pertaining to Himself [cf. II - II, q. 30, a. 2 ad 1 um]. In other

words, we might conclude that both the intimate essence of the mercy of God, as well as its motive, are also purely spiritual, and hence, authentically divine.

b. Divine Mercy is the Most Efficient of the Operative Virtues of God:

1.] God is not only merciful, but He is so in a superlative degree - so much so that His divine Mercy shines forth as the most active of all the Divine Attributes, Virtues of operation. St. Thomas explains: a virtue can be the greatest under a two-fold aspect: either in so far as it is considered either in itself, or regarding the one who possesses it. Mercy is of itself the greatest of virtues. It is precisely a quality of mercy to pour forth goodness on others - and further, it pertains to it to make up for the defects of others.

2.] This aspect is said to be in a supreme degree in one who is superior - so, with good reason it is held to be a prerogative of God to have mercy and in using it, God makes a display of His omnipotence. Regarding the subject who possesses it, mercy is no greater than the other virtues except when the one who is endowed with it excels over all, and has no one superior, but when this person stands over all others. For anyone who has others superior to him, it is better to have recourse to the superior in the quest for remedies for those who are subordinate to him/her. Since humanity has God as supreme in all things, that charity with which human beings are united to God is more excellent than mercy - which renders one inclined to supply for the deficiencies in others [cf. II - II, q. 30, a. 4].

3.] In the light of this teaching of St. Thomas, it might be understandable how among the attributes, or operative virtues of God: including His mercy, justice, liberality, magnificence - it is divine Mercy that has attracted the greatest attention of the sacred authors. This is true of the Historical Books, as well as the Prophetic Books, the Psalms, and the Wisdom tradition. This special emphasis given to Divine Mercy can never allow the theologian to overlook the fact that the Perfection of the Divine Being is unique and infinite. So, various virtues that we may distinguish in order to have a clearer idea of spiritual realities, in God are all aspects of His charity. It is with Divine Charity that He loves Divine Goodness - and secondarily, by which He extends love to His creatures, to whom He communicates His own perfections.

4.] In so far as this communication is made according to the proportion due to different realities, there would be Divine Justice. This is the most ordered love of the divine goodness. In so far as such communication of goods to creatures does not look to anything of His own benefit, but is simply the manifestation of goodness, there will be an effect of the Divine Liberality, which is gratuitous love. In so far as the perfections from God that are communicated are

ordained to make up for deficiencies in creatures, this will be an effect of the **Divine Mercy**. This is an aspect of Divine Love, in so far as it alone is capable of filling in for all that is lacking and for rendering one happy [cf. I, q. 21, a.3 c].

5.] In the OT, God is revealed as the Creator of the universe - He is like an ocean of truth, goodness, and happiness within His own bosom. This grandeur was not denied in the NT, but rather it is confirmed there and complemented: "... Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to complete them..." [cf. Mt 5:17]. This principle would seem to hold true in the very first place, in the revelation regarding God Himself.

6.] The manifestation that God is Triune in Persons does not take anything away from the unity of nature of "the One Who is" [cf. Ex 3:14]. The affirmation of the beloved disciple that God is charity, and whoever stands in charity, remains in God and God in him/her [cf. I Jn 4:16]. This in no way lessens the intimate reason of His immense charity toward creatures. Human beings are challenged to a sublime ideal of being perfect, compassionate, as the heavenly Father is. St. Paul reminded the early church to put on that love which is the bond of perfection [cf. Col 3:14].

7.] St. Thomas emphasizes the relationship between charity and mercy in the life of the Christian: the compendium of the Christian religion is mercy in so far as it pertains to exterior works. But, the internal affection of charity that unites us to God is more noble than dilection or than mercy. We are assimilated to God by reason of that union of affection that we have with Him. This, then, is more important in mercy, which renders us similar to God in external activity [cf. II - II, q. 30, a. 4, ad 2 et 3].

2. The Canticles of Divine Mercy: The Old and New Creation

a. The Mercy of God in the Creation of the Universe:

1.] The Divine Mercy is above all manifest in the creation of the universe - in the production of the entire cosmos out of nothing. Before God Who is the All, the culmination of all perfection - stands the nothingness of the creature. Precisely as such, the creature has nothing of its own, but all creation is that which technically really is "not"! It can be understood, then, how God in calling being out of nothing, to life, to knowledge, to happiness exercises infinitely powerful mercy. All levels of creation: the angels, humanity, irrational beings, plants, minerals - all have come into being through the infinite mercy of God.

2.] The wondrous creation is all the more admirable in so far as it all the more gratuitous. It is the clear teaching of Vatican I that the created universe

is an act of the most free counsel of God. One notes the wonders of outer space to have some idea of the awesomeness of God - thinking of the tremendously powerful liberality of the sun that warms our universe is an example of physical liberality. In the power of its own constitution, light and heat - some idea of the greatness of God might be had for some.

3.] If one were to speak of a moral liberality, one would never confuse this with even the hint of an idea that God really was not infinitely happy within - but that He had some secret "need" to create. God created to share this goodness and love. Creation is the work of the Holy Trinity [cf. CCC ## 290-292] - the world was created for the Glory of God [cf. CCC ## 293, f.] - He creates by wisdom and love [cf. CCC ## 295-] - God alone created the universe freely, directly, and without any help [cf. CCC # 317].

b. The Mercy of God is Evident in the Elevation of Human Beings and Angels to Grace:

1.] Grace is a participation in the life of God - it introduces us into the Trinitarian life. The vocation to eternal life is supernatural. The grace of Christ is a gratuitous gift. Since grace belongs to the supernatural order, it escapes our experience and cannot be known except by faith. [cf. CCC ## 1995-2005].

2.] The Creator elevated the spiritual world to the delights of His divine friendship in the time of their production out of nothing. In each spiritual being, He placed a passive capacity to be elevated further. There is no inherent right, nothing in creatures that could ever merit to be raised to this. The shared intimate life with God is a treasure that is its own reward. This is a transcendent world of knowledge and of love in the mystery of the interior life of the Most August Blessed Trinity. With grace, the gifted spiritual creatures are endowed with the Theological Virtues, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and, in the end - the Beatific Vision for all eternity: these are essentially divine "graces".

3.] We are indeed the friends of God, His sons and daughters, heirs of His own happiness, temples of the three Divine Persons - but, all of this by an absolutely gratuitous act on the part of a Sovereign Donor. Neither in human nature, nor in the angelic, is there the slightest possibility on their own to contemplate God, to reach out to Him, to be included by Him in friendship. The elevation to the supernatural order remains an act of total Divine Mercy. The creatures had no rights to this elevation - it is sheer gift, out of divine mercy.

4.] Even more than creation, this call to the supernatural level extended to spiritual creatures, is absolutely gratuitous. This is the divine example of sheer goodness being diffusive of itself - that we might have some eternal share in the truth and goodness and joy of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

c. The Triumph of Divine Mercy in the Father's Plan of salvation:

1.] Faith can, therefore, try to examine the circumstances of Jesus' death, faithfully handed on by the Gospels, and illuminated by other historical sources, the better to understand the meaning of the Redemption [cf. CCC # 573] - Christ's redemptive death in God's Plan of Salvation is an exercise in absolute gratuity of the Father's mercy [cf. CCC ## 599,ff.]

2.] The Omnipotence of God cannot fail in the carrying out the Divine Plan of His Wisdom. The eternal plan of human salvation is revealed to us in the story of its unfolding through time. This came to be called "Salvation History." God ordered what was to be accomplished in the manner in which events were to be carried out. The story of Redemption reflects faithfully the plan that God conceived in the secret of His Providence. These various happenings unfolded in the course of Salvation History:

a.] The Mercy of God in the Permission of Original Sin: Original Sin is an essential truth of our faith [cf. CCC ## 388-389. The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the reverse side of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all, that all need salvation, and that salvation is offered to all through Jesus Christ. The Church which has the mind of Christ [cf. I Co 2:16] knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ.

By Divine Providence, the fall of Adam and Eve as described in Genesis already elicited the promise of a redeemer, or some kind of "righting" what went wrong. There are no easy solutions in the reality of sin - between the Plan of God and human freedom: generally thought to be abused in the choice of sin. Freedom is orientated toward "good", of which sin is only apparent.

In the old theological debates, it was asked whether God's Son would have been incarnate had there been no sin: the more widely held view may have been that He would have anyway, so that the divinity could indeed grace humanity - independent of anything but God's love. St. Thomas seemed to hold the view that "Jesus" is Savior, and came to restore the Father's plan, out of His Mercy. We only know the divine Will by what has taken place.

"... Adam prefigured the one to come; but the gift itself considerably outweighed the fall. If it is certain that through one man's fall many died, it is even more certain that divine grace, coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, came to so many as an abundant free gift. ***The results of the gift far outweigh the results of the one man's sin:*** for after one single fall came judgment with a verdict of condemnation, now after many falls comes ***grace with its verdict of acquittal.*** If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as a consequence of one man's fall, it is

even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift that he does not deserve, of being made righteous. Again, as one man's fall brought condemnation to everyone, ***so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified***. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous... but ***however great the number of sins committed, grace was even greater***; and just as sin reigned wherever there was death, so ***grace will reign to bring eternal life*** thanks to the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, our Lord..." [cf. Rm 5:15-20].

There should be no surprise that human nature has been raised to a higher level to that in which Adam and Eve were born in the state of innocence. God in fact, permitted evil for the purpose of gaining from it a good that would be far superior than that destroyed by sin. This is why we read in Romans [cf., 5:20] that ***wherever sin abounded, grace super-abounded***. The Church sings this concept in her Easter Vigil: ***'O happy fault that has merited such, and so great a Redeemer!'*** [cf. St. Thomas, III, q. 1, a.3, ad 3].

A careful reading of the early biblical stories offers the basis of these insights: it helps greatly to notice that very spontaneity with which God, in no way moved by any signs of repentance on the part of Adam and Eve, simply appeared in the terrestrial paradise. Even before inflicting on them the merited punishment, He promised the complete victory of the Son of the Woman over the tempting serpent. This is a manifest indication of the preceding divine plan. This seems to have been the permission of evil with the intent of a more glorious reivindication of God's grace by means of Christ the Savior. This is the sapiential prophecy that must have sounded most surprising to the first parents as well as to personified Evil, Satan: "...I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head and you will strike its heel..." [cf. Gn 3:15]

2.] Divine Mercy in preparing for the Savior's Advent: There is an enormous mystery ... in salvation history! Thinking over the millennia, perhaps without number - and the millions upon millions of human beings - and then God chose the insignificant Israel to be the land and the people from which and whom salvation would come. Paul seems to have pondered this: "... Now before we came of age we were as good as slaves to the elemental principles of this world, but when the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to become adopted as sons..." [cf. Ga 4:4, f.].

The holiness and mercy of God would not allow anyone to conclude that all of these nameless millions - all of whom were made to His image and likeness - have been lost for eternity. The promise of future redemption resounded, and was

repeated through the ages - centuries later it was renewed under a different form to the Patriarch, Abraham: **in you will be blessed all the nations** [cf. Gn 12:3]. When we think of Jesus as **the universal Savior** of humanity, it is necessary to note how His foreseen merits in some way preserved those who were faithful to the Word of God. And on it went - through the Exodus Redemption miracles [water from the stone, bread from heaven - and the seas, desert becoming a highway], through the Judges, Kings and Prophets - and the ancient Sages: all looking forward to the One Who said He was the Son of God [cf. Ws 2:13].

The full victory, of course, over Satan and sin is reserved personally to Jesus Christ and to the Woman who would give birth to Him. Only after His death, Resurrection and Ascension to heaven would the shower of graces descend in abundance on humanity. However, the meritorious virtue of the Redemption worked out by God's Son was universal, both in time as well as in space. By divine mercy, this was also able to reach back in time to those who preceded the coming of Jesus Christ. These OT "Saints" were united to Jesus Christ through their "implicit faith" and could be saved in the "foreseen merits of the Savior". Jesus may have alluded to this: "... Your father Abraham rejoiced to think that he would see my Day. He saw it and was glad..." [cf. Jn 8:56] - "... anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and rewards those who try to find him... All these [OT "saints"] died in faith, before receiving any of the things that had been promised, but they saw them in the far distance and welcomed them, recognizing that they were only strangers and nomads on earth..." [cf. Heb 11:6, 13, f.].

In the background of all of this is the "**universal salvific will of God**" that is its own mystery, flowing from the intimate nature of God and His Divine Mercy - the from His eternal love assumes in relation to His creation:"... God wants everyone to be saved and to reach full knowledge in truth..." [cf. **I Tm 2:4**]. The mystery of this salvific will of God will never be totally fathomed:"do not forget that God can be severe as well as kind ...Just as you changed from being disobedient to God and now enjoy mercy because of their disobedience, so those who are disobedient now - and only because of the mercy shown to you - will enjoy mercy eventually.. God has imprisoned all men in their own disobedience only to show mercy to all mankind. How rich are the depths of God - how deep his wisdom and knowledge - and how impossible to penetrate His motives or understand His methods! ... [cf. Rm 11:22, 30, ff.].

3.] The Divine Mercy in the Coming of the Promised Redeemer: after the original sin, there was not only promised the Incarnation, but it would be "redemptive, salvific". Only the Son of God would be able to bring this to fruition, perfection. The ultimate end of the Divine Plan is the infinite glory that would come to God in sharing His own goodness and truth. The extended arms of Christ on the

Cross are for many the symbol of the width and breadth of the loving Mercy of God for humanity. In this, there had to be a satisfaction of the Divine Justice gravely offended - and an expression of His Mercy that would go beyond all human comprehension. God willed in such a way to manifest his infinite Mercy so that in no way would His divine Justice remain offended [cf. St. Thomas: III Sent. d. I, q. I, a. 1; III, q. 46, a.1, ad 3 um]. The charity of the patient Christ was far greater than the malice of His crucifiers Therefore, the virtue of Jesus Christ was greater in satisfying with His own Passion than was the power of those who crucified Him in offending Him: the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ was both sufficient and super-abundant to satisfy for the sins of those who caused his death [cf. III, q. 48, a. 2., ad 2].

The glory brought to the Trinity by the Paschal Mystery redounds also on humanity: sins confessed are co-efficients of holiness. Sufferings endured become salvific: whatever Jesus Christ has assumed, He has redeemed. He has assumed trial and temptation, mental and physical suffering, death and burial - and all of these have been super-abundantly redeemed. We are to have those same sentiments that were in Christ Jesus, Who humbled Himself, became obedient unto death, death on the cross. Therefore, God has exalted Him, giving Him a name that is beyond all names, so that in the Name of Jesus every knee shall bend, in the heavens above, of earthly beings, as well as those under the earth - and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord for the glory of God the Father [cf. Ph 2:6-11] . "... Let us not lose sight of Jesus Christ who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy that was still in the future, he endured the cross, disregarding the shamefulfulness of it, and from now on he has taken his place at the right of God's throne..." [cf. Heb 12:2, ff.].

In Jesus' salvific work, there have accrued the great benefits of merits, expiation and redemption over the three-fold slavery to the world, the flesh and the devil. The good attained by humanity surpasses in splendor the original good possessed prior to the original sin. The humanity of Christ, united to the Divinity - and the resulting created beatitude which is an enjoyment of the life of the Trinity - as well as the graces of the Blessed Virgin Mary - all of the blessings of the New Covenant enjoy a participated dignity because of the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God. With Christ, in Him and through him - all share in the fullness of His grace, virtue, merit, union with the Trinity. This is all symbolized in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

4.] The Divine Mercy present in the Church, her Sacraments: the Sacred Heart of Jesus opens wide to share the abundance of its merciful love. The Church is described as the Body of Christ, His Spouse, the Mother of the redeemed. In Jesus Christ, the Church is as a sacrament, a sign and an instrument of the intimate union with God and of the unity of the human race [I, q. 25, a. 6, ad 4].

Everything in/of the Church is ordered to the eternal salvation of human beings: her government, liturgy, disciple, sacred sciences, culture art. Like the Co-redemptrix, the Virgin Immaculate, the Church is a mother of mercy. It is the Church's mission to liberate humanity from whatever slaveries it falls into. To carry out her Mission of Mercy, the Church can count on all the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge, the goodness of the Incarnate Word. Just as in the first instant of the Incarnation, the Son of the Eternal Father, endowed with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the human nature that was substantially united, so that it might be a suitable instrument of the divinity in the harsh work of our Redemption. So also in the hour of His precious death, His Church was enriched with the most abundant gifts of the Paraclete, so that in the distribution of the divine fruits of the redemption, she became the valid and perennial instrument of the Incarnate Word. [for these pages 2-30 of these notes, cf. Card. L. M.Ciappi, OP, *Il Cuore di Cristo Centro del Mistero della salvezza*. Roma: C.d.C. 1981, pp. 117-153, 23-49]

5.] Divine Mercy in the Church's struggles throughout the Centuries: from the NT, it is believed that the moral life is already spiritual worship. We present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, within the Body of Christ that we form and in communion with the offering of his Eucharist. In the liturgy, and the celebration of the sacraments, prayer and teaching are conjoined with the grace of Christ to enlighten and nourish Christian activity. As does the whole of the Christian life, the moral life finds its source and summit in the Eucharistic sacrifice. {cf. CCC # 2031}.

Christ indeed always associates the Church with himself in this great work in which God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is his beloved Bride who calls to her Lord and through him offers worship to the eternal Father [cf. SC 7].

6.] The Mercy of God present in the Final Judgment: "He will come again to judge the Living and the Dead". This is explained by the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** under the Profession of Faith: Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching. Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of heart be brought to light. Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned. Our attitude about our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love. On the last day, Jesus will say: Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. [cf. # 678].

Christ is the Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgment on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as Redeemer of the world. He acquired this right by his cross. The Father has given all judgment to the Son. Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life He has in Himself. By rejecting grace

in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love. [cf. # 679].

The Church's teaching on the Particular Judgment is taught by the Catechism under Article 12 of the Creed, "I believe in life everlasting." Each human being receives eternal retribution of each one's immortal soul at the very moment of death in a particular judgment that refers life to Jesus Christ {cf. CCC ## 1021 - 1022}. The Last Judgment of both the just and the unjust will be at the end of time, at the resurrection of all the dead. [cf. CCC ## 1038-1050].

This will be the definitive realization of God's plan to bring under a single had all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men.

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8. The Sacred Heart and the Divine *Hesed*

Premise: [cf. R.B.Y. Scott, "Heart", in: *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*. Vol II. Nashville: Abingdon 1962, pp.549, ff.]

[1] First of all there are many expressions in the English language indicating all kinds of deep interior sentiments, as: "I give you my heart" - "cross my heart" - "he/she put his/her heart into the project" - this person is "all heart" - to steal one's heart". All of these are some indication of the deepest interiority that a human being may have. This fact may shed some light on the depths of the biblical usage of the word "heart."

[2] In the Word of God, the heart is very often the very core of an individual - the deepest reality of one's human personality and being. Very often the "spiritual" powers of a person would be attributed to the human heart - which was always thought to be the supreme organ, the deepest interior font of one's life, thought and choices. This is the "deepest" part of a human being - or, one's supreme point of contact, where God speaks to a human being. In the depths of one's heart dwelt the hopes and fears, the plans and choices, all that would determine one's "character." Oddly enough, there are three Hebrew words for heart - but, they do not seem to be distinguished in their meaning. In Greek these are generally rendered by *kardia* and sometimes by *nous* - the basis of the word for conversion, meta-*noia*. A "change of heart" is always a deep interior conversion.

[3] Food was thought to “strengthen one’s heart” [Jgs 19:5] - wine would “gladden” it [cf. Ps 104:15] - as an unknown Psalmist sang of the Glories of Creation! In Exodus’ Song of Moses, there is the applied use of the word: “... A blast from your nostrils and the waters piled high; the waves stood upright like a dike; in the heart of the sea the deeps came together...” [cf. Ex 15:8]. It is used by Jesus Himself in explaining the example of Jonah: “... For as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights..” [cf. Mt 12:40].

[4] The “Heart” and Human Interiority: the word, as has been noted, indicates the deepest interior seat of one’s emotions and thought:

[a] Emotions:

- “bad” or “good” [cf. Rm 1:24; 10:1] - “glad” [cf. Pr 27:11; Ac 14:17]
- “faint”, “flutter” [cf. Gn 42:28; 45:26; I S 21:4] - “melt” Ps 22:14] - “tremble” [1 S 28:5] - “throb” [cf. Ps 38:10]; “fearful” [cf. Is 35:4]
- “sad” [cf. Ne 2:2] - “broken” [cf. Ps 51; 69:20] - “discouraged” [cf. Nb 32:7];
- “loving” [cf. Dt 13:3].

[b] Intellect: the heart is the core of the intellectual life:

- meditation [cf. Ps 4:4; Lk 2:19, 52] - thinking [cf. 1 Ch 29:18]: “to say in the heart” [cf. Gn 27:41; Ps 10:6]. - wisdom [Ex 31:6; I K 10:24].
- memory’s storehouse [cf. Pr 3:3; Lk 1:66].

[c] Volition: it is the center of choices, both good and bad:

- wicked [cf. Pr 6:18; 11:20; Mt 15:19] - godless [Jb 36:13] - turned from God [cf. I K 11:2] - double [Ps 12:2];
- proud [Dt 8:14] - hard [cf. Zc 7:12] - stubborn [cf. Jr 3:17]
- good, perfect, blameless [cf. I K 8:61] - upright [cf. Ps 32:11] - honest [cf. Lk 8:15] - pure [cf. Mt 5:8] - single [cf. Ep 6:5] - circumcised [cf. Jr 4:4; Rm 2:29]
- with “all” [cf. Dt 6:5] - renewed [cf. Ezk 18:31] - seeks God [cf. 2 Ch 12:14]

[d] Point of Contact with God: the “depths” of one’s being is where one finds, contacts, speaks with God.

- speaks [cf. Ps 27:8] - God fashions them [cf. Ps 33:15];

- God's word dwells there [cf. Dt 30:14] - He looks upon it [cf. 1 S 16:7] - knows its secrets [cf. Ps 44:- faith rises here [cf. Rm 10:10 - as does fear [cf. Jr 32:40]
- trusts [cf. Ps 28:7].

[5] The word would come very close to what today is sometimes understood by "character", "personality". Sometimes it is used as a substitute for the personal pronouns - and sometimes it is also parallel with "reins". [cf. also: Jan G. Bovenmars, MSC, *Biblical Spirituality of the Heart*. Alba House 1991; *Spiritualities of the Heart*. ed. by Annice Callahan, RSCJ, NY/Mahwah NJ: Paulist 1990]

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1. The Central Divine Trait: In General [cf. Nelson Glueck, *HESED in the Bible*, Philadelphia PA: Jacobs Press 1967]: it is a very general word, and quite difficult to render in modern languages:

a. As a general description, *HESED* is conduct - either divine or human - that is based on a reciprocal relationship of rights and duties. This is the type of human response that is based on the mutual readiness to lend a hand.

b. It is a governing force in human behavior, seen as that manner of conducting oneself that would be determined by reciprocal relationships. It seems to represent the sum total of the religious and ethical obligations between men and women in daily life. While it includes the sense of "religiosity", it is broader than that.

c. This term used for conducting human affairs is eventually projected toward God - this would be the Lord's initiative based on His relationship established with His "specially chosen treasure", humanity. This is His covenant conduct, the way He answers those who are faithful to Him - or, when those who have been disloyal, have returned to Him. For human beings, this is a coming together, an assembling of offering help, to hurry to assist someone. The ideal of mutual assistance runs through the concept. [cf. Glueck, pp. 106, f.].

2. Its "Secular "Meaning":

a. Very simply, it is always that manner of acting that would correspond to a mutual relationship already established, made up of rights and duties, privileges and responsibilities. In this sense, only those who have agreed upon the reciprocal bond would either extend or be the recipients of *HESED*.

b. This bond of reciprocal relationship bears with it its own sense of "obligation" - it would be mutually binding, and certain ways of acting, responding to one's need, or situation. There is included in this ideal a sense of "loyalty" based

on truthfulness in the rapport. Very often, this was all reinforced by means of an oath. This would bring the concept quite close to the ideal of “Covenant”.

c. A Covenant is an agreement made between two in which one/both either make, or have imposed on them - promises under oath to perform, or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance. This is the major metaphor used to describe the contact between God and Israel. These following parts have been identified:

- Preamble: introduction of the parties;
- Historical Prologue: usually the description of what one, or both have done in the past in behalf of the other.
- Stipulations: this is the formal agreeing to carrying out certain injunctions, commands or prohibitions.
- Periodic Reading: this is placed so that the contracting parties would be reminded at intervals of the agreements taken.
- Witnesses: sometimes a land - mark, or a pile of stones commemorating the agreement - or even cosmic signs, such as the sun or the moon.
- Curses/Blessings: the early Covenants were based on fear, and curses, which perhaps were the usual components of Unilateral Covenants imposed, for example, on a defeated people - eventually, when the religious dimension took the upper-hand, the promise of blessings, or beatitudes become the dominating feature.

[This is already a vague structure of the entire OT and NT - “testament” being the Latin equivalent for “Covenant.”].

d. The outstanding traits, or characteristics of the *HESED* in the Covenants would be: reciprocity, mutual assistance, sincerity, friendliness, family spirit, duty, loyalty, love. *HESED* was just not a unilateral act of grace, or kindness, favor or love - everything was usually in response to agreements made in mutual freedom. [cf. Glueck, pp. 54, ff.].

3. Religious Over-tones: the affiliation between God and His specially Chosen People became one of mutual rights and duties, all initiated by the divine goodness. The tie between the God of Israel and His People could only be maintained when *HESED* was mutually lived. In all truth, however, its “eschatological” overtones were ever present - Israel never presumed that they could keep up their end of the bargain totally, so its fulfillment was also thought of as a distant goal. Never too far in the background is the Covenant of Sinai: “... Then Moses ordered certain young Israelites to offer holocausts and to immolate bullocks to Yahweh as communion

sacrifices...Half of the blood Moses took up into basins, and the other half he cast on the altar...then he took the other half, and cast it on the people..." [cf. Ex 24: 5, ff.].

a. This reciprocal manner of conduct among human beings becomes then the standard for Israel's response to the goodness of God. Creation and redemption [perhaps in reverse order] are the divine Historical Prologue and Israel is asked to respond to the "sacred marvels" on the part of God. While *HESED* was the usual pattern of human behavior, soon it was implicitly and finally, explicitly - the proper manner of relating to God.

b. This, then, became the ethical and religious deportment, that required of all parties honesty and loyalty, justice and righteousness. It was by way of "excellence", perhaps, pondering on the normal ways of conducting business among human beings, that Israel was inspired to make use of *HESED* for its model of its daily response to God. Further ideas such as the "fear of the Lord" and knowledge of Him, also played their role here. *HESED* included religiosity, piety, kindness - and love for others created and redeemed by God.

c. While very often the ideal of mercy is included in *HESED* - they are not identical, in that authentic *HESED* is obligatory. "Covenant Love" is evident when the Lord forgives totally the unfaithful partner [Israel] in His espousals with them. If this divinely initiated marriage-bond is to go on, God "has" to pardon - also so that the other nations might see that He is "different", God "needs" to forgive Israel's repeated infidelity. As a result of this sublime "nuptial forgiveness" *HESED* is often thought of as being linked with compassion, mercy and favor. In itself, *HESED* is always based on the obligations stipulated and assumed. The divine based ethical demands of God are the fundamental laws of the theocracy.

d. Not unlike the *ANAWIM*, the "**Poor whom Yahweh loves**" [cf. Andre' Gelin], a group of the Lord's lowly "**faithful ones**" developed, who came to be known as the *HASIDIM*. Literally, these would all who live the *HESED* but would have the overtones of the "Faithful" - those who received the Word of God in obedience, and then remain "faithful" to it - persevere in their loyalty to God and in response to Him. Especially for the Prophets, *HESED* would be the consideration of human behavior in a religious and ethical sense. [cf. Glueck, pp. 68, f.].

4. A Glimpse of the Divinity in the Bi - lateral Covenant:

a. Ps 69 is a lament where a sinner begs for deliverance from his transgressions - there is no other hope but God alone. He prays on the strength of the Love that is basic to the Covenant God has initiated with all the people. There is a flow of divine attributes in this Psalm that is quite reminiscent of the *Miserere*, Ps

51: "... In your loving kindness, answer me, in your great tenderness, turn to me; do not hide your face from me - I am in trouble, answer me, come to my aid..." [v. 15, f.].

b. The divine *HESED* was the Lord's way of acting directly with His "own" - and He also employed it in inspiring human agency in its dealings with Israel. There is the passage of destiny, where Joseph is treated kindly by his jailer because of God's interest in him, and Joseph's fidelity to God in duress [cf. Gn 39:21]. The Lord was "with" Joseph, this man of destiny - sold into slavery by his own brothers, only to redeem them in the fullness of the Lord's time. It seems as though the warden had a "share" in the Lord's *HESED*, somehow participated in it, and bestowed kindness on the imprisoned Joseph.

c. "For my part, I took courage, for the favor of Yahweh, my God, was with me, and I gathered the leading men of Israel together to set out with me ... God has not forgotten us in our slavery; he has shown us kindness in the eyes of the kings of Persia, obtaining permission for us to rebuild the Temple..." [cf. EZk 7:28; 9:9]. The Lord seems to have inspired the Persians to allow Israel to rebuild its temple. The divine *HESED* was meted out by the Persians, but under divine influence. The Lord Himself moved the king's heart to glorify the Temple of God.

d. Another man of destiny - Daniel - is treated with extraordinary kindness in his prison. Once again, a non-believer, the Babylonian jail-master, becomes the unwitting "servant of the Lord", sharing with Daniel the *HESED* of God Himself: "... by the grace of God Daniel met good will and sympathy on the part of his chief eunuch..." [cf. Dn 1:9]. [cf. Glueck, pp. 101, ff.]

5. A Rapid OT Survey:

a. The Hebrew *HEN* is usually associated with what later came to be known in Paul's writings as "grace". It is that gracious and favorable action gratuitously passing from a superior to an inferior - this can only be the free gift of God, and could never even be "merited". It is sheer gift - in certain contexts, it is what would be placed in prayer; "Please!" *HESED* always presupposes a bond, albeit one that God has lovingly, but previously initiated. This "Covenant Bond" can only be broken by humans - God is supremely faithful in His promises, alliances. If it is broken, in some way, God, too, has to count His losses!" Israel is unique to Him, His "special treasure."

b. *HESED*, then, is a favor-giving relationship that develops out of a bond previously and freely established by God - in which He "marvelously condescends" to be a partner in this Covenant. This divine "super-virtue" is found in the following Tradents and in a diversity of emphases:

1.] Early History:

- the “J” Tradent: describes human relationships [cf. Gn 24:49; 47:29 - Abraham’s servant looking for Isaac’s spouse; and in Jacob’s last wishes to Joseph]. On the part of God, once the Covenant with Abraham has been established [cf. Gn 15:8, ff.].

- the “E” Tradent [to whatever extent it exists as a separate Tradent]: the *HESED* is not found with *ELOHIM* but only with *Yahweh*. The “Covenant Yahweh” is revealed in the Exodus dialogue, the Song of Victory over the sea, Moses’ Canticle [cf. Ex 15:13].

- the “D” Tradent: is only used of God, and always in intimate bond with the Covenant. This is really a bi-lateral Covenant and Israel’s part in it is loving obedience.

- the “P” tradent: *HESED* does not appear.

2.] Later History: some would distinguish a “Saul” source [SL] - and a “Samuel source” [SM].

In “SL” [cf. 2 S 2:6; 15:20 the reference is to the King as God’s Partner” in the Covenant - and Yahweh’s extended benevolence toward those honoring the king, His specially elected Partner.

In SM: this is found in 1 S 15:6, more as a social quality - a common religious affiliation, belief in the one God.

3.] Prophetic Writings:

a.] Pre-Exilic: emphasize an impending doom, collapse, fall, captivity. As a result, there is hardly any *HESED* other than the fact that God’s fidelity has been betrayed.

b.] After the Fall of Jerusalem: particularly II - Is emphasizes it. Ho [cf. 4:1; 6:4; 10:12; 12:7] sees it more as a human quality. It is also in the classical passage: “... What is good has been explained to you... this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God...” [cf. Mi 6:7, f.]. - “... Apply the Law fairly, and practice kindness and compassion, towards each other...” [cf. Zc 7:9].

c.] In preparation for the “New Covenant”, it seems closely associated with forgiveness: “... I have withdrawn my peace from this people ... love and pity...” [cf. Jr 16:7] - “... I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant in my affection for you. I build you once more, and you shall be rebuilt...

[cf. Jr 31:3, ff.]. *HESED* in its aspect of Covenant Mercy is very close to grace, loving-kindness and love.

4.] Wisdom Literature: Job has little to offer and may only be in one text, in the Elihu speeches, that some interpreted as later intrusions, [cf. Jb 37:13]. Proverbs offers its challenge: "... To be a schemer, is this not evil? Lay worthy plans, and kindness and loyalty await you..." [cf. Pr 14:22].

5.] Later Historical Writings, the Chronicler: have more or less accepted the "D" view, the dynasty of David depended on the divine *HESED*. There is need zeal regarding the Sabbath - and zeal for worship in general as Israel's "part in the bargain."

6.] The Psalter: has been graced with the divine *HESED* more than one hundred times:

- it often refers to times of personal, or national hardship;
- God needs to exercise it so that He will not appear impotent [cf. Pss 6:5; 13:6; 40:11, f.; 44:27; 88:12; 90:14; 94:18; 109:21, f.; 115:1];
- it is a moral imperative for the afflicted people;
- in His creation and providence, God favors His "own" [cf. Ps 33:5, ff.; 36:6, ff.; 147:8, ff.];
- the invitation to worship God brings with it the promise of His *HESED*. [cf. Ps 117] [cf. 5:8; 48:10; 63:4, f.; 92:3].

6. An Entire OT Theology based on *HESED* : [cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*. Philadelphia: Westminster 1959 - two volumes.]: the Covenant concept is basic for any in depth understanding of God's and Israel's mutual relationship. All Covenant rests on *HESED*. The unbreakable fidelity of God toward His People remains one of the "sacred marvels" of ancient lore. The *HESED* is often coupled with *RAHAMIM* - a masculine and feminine value fusing in the nature of God, as His tenderness, strong masculine fidelity. This establishes, then - with truth, and grace - the most profound meaning of the relationship between the Almighty and His created universe. [cf. Glueck, pp.1-7, passim]

a. Divine revelation is phrased in Covenant factual terms. This is not Greek speculation - but, down to earth history. In forming people in accord with His word and will, God offers a share of knowledge in His being and plan. There is a clear emphasis on "life-style", a way of living life, of responding to a code of conduct and morality, and also worship. For deliverance from slavery, the Lord asked for obedience to the Book of the Covenant, the Decalogue.

b. The divine will is made known without ambiguity, with utmost clarity: this can both be depended upon, and reasonable appeals can be made to it. There is some evidence that when Moses asked to see the divine glory, and was refused, the Lord does seem to “change His mind” ever so slightly, in adapting the conditions of Covenant to the weakness of the people. The divine mind had first “decided” to eliminate this people as a bad investment - but, re-thought His position on the strength of Moses’ prayer: “... But Moses pleaded with Yahweh his God ... So, Yahweh relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he threatened...” [cf. Ex 32: 11-14]. The oft-repeated “Covenant Formula” is almost nuptial in its intensity, exclusivity: ***You shall be My People and I will be your God!*** This is no whimsical God as was always feared in polytheism, or any foundation for a fear based on being born under an “unlucky star” - or that the people, or individuals, were “cursed” by the simple fact of being born. In this Covenant, there is an environment of hopeful trust and confidence.

c. The “content” of God’s Will is spelled out in His various injunctions, renditions of the Decalogue. Sharing in the Covenant brought this “amphyctyony”, this loose federation of tribes around a single sanctuary - into a Covenant People, trusting in the divine HESED. It is the will of God that the people follow: either as a cloud by day, or a fire in the night. It is the Will of God which specifies the Ark of the Covenant, the Feast Days, the Covenant Calendar, and the Covenant Stipulations. While this began as a tribal gathering, it became “nationalized” and eventually “universalized” - absorbing the “stranger” into it [cf. the differences in Jgs 5; Gn 49; Dt 33 - in the specification of the tribes]. The “assembly” - both military and liturgical - comes together by the Will of God, in response to His word. If “**Isra-el**” can mean “**God Rules**” - this would not be so much political, as religious. The religious destiny of the nation becomes its central importance.

d. “Faith” in the Divine word and Plan also formed a faith in His Redemption, His Creation - and shaped an interior attitude toward events and made of them all a Salvation History. The divine will is present in social life, and in the national fortunes. So many other nations were steeped in nature mythology, and determinism - for Israel, it was the transcendently free will of God. This view of history enabled the People to understand present history as transient, and yet part of the Lord’s protective custody. Truly, the Lord holds the whole world in His hand! All creation/liturgy began the evening before, then the morning - all through the days of the week - including all time, all history. Even the sun and the moon were as “calendar markers” for the celebration of the festivals.

e. The Lord is the Creator of Nature, and never limited by it: He rides the clouds - He hung the distant stars as a “cosmic” decoration, in the far distant reaches of the cosmos by His “fingers” - or He breathed them out of His mouth of a cold

evening. He shoots His arrows [lightning] in anger, and hangs His bow high in the clouds in the Covenant of Peace - in the absence of rain, He sends the dew - the night is for the wild beasts, the day is reserved for human activities. He takes care of the insignificant mountain rodents, as well as governing the grandiose events of history - the great powers of this world are but dust in His scales. These are not “triumphalistic” utterances, but simply the communication of God to a trusting people in His mercy - the true power.

f. The magnificently simple, but significant Covenant Ceremony of the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood [cf. Ex 24:6, ff.] might have originally been some kind of mystery ritual renewing life in the community. But, for Israel - this ritual is unique - blood is the principle of life: blood was considered the seat of life [cf. Lv 1:5 +; 17:11; Dt 12:16, 23] and this is why it enjoyed a leading role in sacrificial celebration. The slaughter of the substitute victims, always animals - early became a cultic act - and had to be performed on an altar [cf. Is 14:32, f.] - and according to the minute prescriptions [cf. Lv 17: 3, f.] in the sanctuary itself. To eat flesh with the blood is always forbidden [cf. Gn 9:4; Lv 3:17; 7:26; 17:12; 19:26; cf. Ac 15:29]. The shedding of human blood cries out for vengeance [cf. Gn 4:10; Is 26:21; Ezk 24: 7; Jb 16: 18 +] [cf. Note in Jerusalem Bible, Lv 1:5].

g. God was never “necessitated” in the initiation of the Covenant - but, once He freely and lovingly decided upon it, it is backed up by His fidelity. While technically, He could dissolve the bond at any time, this revelation is simply the acknowledgment of the fact that He pre-existed His people: supra-temporal, supra-cosmic, supra-regional. He is by nature independent, and the People are totally dependent on Him. Yet, He chose to love this people: “... If the Lord set his heart on you, and chose you it was not because you outnumbered others; you were the least of all. It was for love of you and to keep the oath that he swore to your fathers that Yahweh brought you out with his mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery...” [cf. Dt 7:7, f.] [cf. Eichrodt, *Theology of the OT*, Vol. I, pp. 36-45, passim].

h. “And when you look up at the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them, or serving them...” [cf. Dt 4:19]. Job [cf. 31:26, f.] makes a confession regarding this cosmic beauty: that when he saw such brilliance, the moon in full glory, he was secretly seduced and his hand touched his mouth in a kiss. This is an eloquent testimony of the seductiveness of idolatry, of any form - but perhaps especially of the heavenly bodies. Their majestic beauty, this sense of cosmic eternity - their gradual, predictable changes - the beauteous light and comforting warmth - their blessing on the crops of the fields, the flocks of the farms, and the families of the hearths - moved many to worship them throughout the ancient

Middle East. The Bible speaks of these heavenly bodies as God's "servants" - He is the Lord God of Hosts, above all of this - Who comes to Israel in His divine *HESED*.

i. "And because He loved your fathers, He chose their heirs after them; He Himself, in His great might, led you out of the land of slavery, to drive from your path nations greater and more populous than you, to take you into their land and to assign it to you as a heritage... Know, therefore, this day and keep in mind that the Lord alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other. Observe His laws and commandments, which I enjoin on you THIS DAY..." [cf. Dt 4: 37, ff.]. It was for love of Israel that led God to choose this people, and lead them to the Promised Land. Dt is the first book of the TORAH to speak of God loving, choosing this people. This makes the emotional dimension of God's relationship to Israel explicit: bonds that are either expressed by filiation or espousals. The emphasis here seems to be adoption by a loving father, Who loves, chooses, assigns an inheritance. This is to be found later in Jr [cf. 3:19] - I resolved to adopt you, and thought for sure that you would call Me 'Father'!

j. "For you are a people consecrated to God: of all the peoples of the earth, the Lord your God chose you to be His treasured people... because He set His heart on you..." [cf. Dt 7:7, f.]. Moses develops Ex 23 and 34: Israel enjoys a privileged status by divine choice. Since they are "consecrated" to the Lord, they need to shun whatever would jeopardize that sacred relationship. They are a holy nation, a kingdom of priests [cf. ex 19:6]. "Consecration" is almost nuptial in its implications: when one is "betrothed", he/she is forbidden to all others - since Israel is God's very own "treasure", the people may not indulge in idolatry of any kind. Immoral behavior would damage this "betrothal", this "consecration."

The Divine Choice, Election: Israel was the only people devoted to Yahweh. Moses makes every effort to make sure they understand that their privileged status was due - not so much to their own wise choices - but, rather because God gratuitously chose them. Dt emphasizes the sacred bond initiated by God toward His people. This is not merely juridical, but one steeped in the psychology of love and mercy. Israel needs periodic reminding of God's love for His people. She must respond in kind, and revere God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, devoting their entire selves to God. This relationship is so intense that it is described in family, or nuptial terms.

Love demands mutual loyalty: this is the main theme of Dt - the ardor and exclusivity owed to the Lord. Dt constantly admonishes believers to worship the one God in their hearts, and to shun all idolatry and its practices. No other book is so insistent on loyalty as this one is.

This is a treasured people [*segullah*]: this is much like a wealthy person's "nest egg" - special "cigar box" funds - this is something genuinely cherished, truly a "treasure" against a rainy day - but, here the emphasis is on the Lord's own lavish gratuity in choosing this non-descript motley crew. The Lord owns all that can be seen from the heights of the sky to the depths of the sea, from one horizon to the other.

There is the ever-present danger of complacency - Israel was constantly tempted to "triumphalism" - that it already had its Temple, the presence of the Glory of God - the blessings of God. Moses warns this people of its insignificance. While the exaggerated view was that under God's blessing, they were as numerous as the stars [cf. Dt 1:10; 10:22; 28:62] - they are still the least of all. The Lord singled them out in loyal fidelity simply because He loved them - this remains the great mystery of history Why?

k. *HESED* is the basis for the Covenant - and this is God's central attribute in His comportment toward this stiff-necked, hard-to-manage People! The entire TORAH employs the ideal of the "Covenant" - but, Dt is often thought of as the "Book of the Covenant". There are several levels, or Covenants:

- the first one must have been the one completed on Sinai - some record of this may be in Dt 5:6-18;
- the second one covers some additional stipulations [Dt 12-26];
- Dt 27 may be a record of a third one.

We are fairly sure of at least two separate Covenant Ceremonies in Exodus: 19-24, and 34 - the restoration with the fuller revelation of God's name in the Exodus Antiphon: A God of Mercy and Forgiveness, pardons to the thousandth generation [cf. Ex 34:6]. So we can note:

- the one that established the original dialogue between God and Israel - this is when Yahweh made an oath to ancient Israel concerning the Promised Land and a descendency. what He wanted in return was loving obedience of the Decalogue.

- Covenant is closely associated with "Promise" - this compact, contract between God and His people was renewed repeatedly through the years - Israel promises to obey, and God promises to comply, to keep His Word, to fulfill His promises.

- the Covenant establishes God as sovereign - but, as a loving parent, spouse - who extends His divine *HESED* to anyone who will respond to Him. [Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS TORAH Commentary. Deuteronomy*. Philadelphia 5756/1996, passim].

7. HESED and Divine Mercy:

a. This “Covenant Love” has included in it a “keenness”, ardent zeal. It requires that all parties privy to the Covenant should express loyalty and faithfulness. It is a persistent, determined, steadfast love of/for God. The word reveals a kind of sub-stratum of fixed, determined almost stubborn steadfastness. If there is a single term, some interpreters prefer “faithfulness” over “kindness” - it is rendered by “leal-love”, or “sure-love.” In Israel’s response it asked for worship, a deeper knowledge of God, proper human behavior. It was necessary to “hear/listen to” the stipulations - this gave rise to the ceremony of listening to the readings in liturgical convocations, with “all one’s heart, mind, soul and strength”. As generation succeeded generation, more and more the People of God noted that God simply refused to reject this people. The maintenance of God’s covenant with his unruly people emphasized ever more the significance of divine mercy, as the ultimate translation of *HESED*.

b. While there is the ever-present danger of juridicism, the legalistic, duty-obligation understanding of *HESED*, there is clear evidence that there came to dominate the sense of mercy-feeling, mercy-response. In the LXX translations, *eleos* is the preferred translation of *HESED*. This indicates, too, a move from internal feelings of beneficence and kindness, towards the external manifestations of these sentiments. The usual translation in Latin is ***misericordia, a heart for the miserable, wretched***. This follows the pattern from the motion from feelings or sentiment, to action. God’s *HESED* is always compassionate [cf. Jr 3:12]. More and more the understanding has given way to mercy-sentiment and action.

c. The divine goodness toward Israel is marked with sublime pardon - leading to the reality that the formula base of the Covenant is basically “mercy-feeling” that needs to become mercy-work, a response in action. Some would use Sarah’s amazing compliance to Abraham’s request that she pass herself off as his sister [cf. Gn 12:13; 20:11, ff.] - was also her *HESED* to her husband in his possible difficulties. The response of Abraham’s cousin in surrendering to Eleazar, the servant of Abraham, in his request for a wife for Abraham’s son [cf. Gn 24] was not so much obligatory *HESED*, but the recognition of the hand of God in the matter.

d. The *HESED* offered by David to Jonathan’s crippled son [cf. 1 S 20:4, ff.] might be seen simply as the king’s compliance with the Covenant he had drawn up long before with Jonathan, his royal protector. Yet, there is also in this - in times that had changed - David’s response as a king after the Lord’s own heart [cf. 1 S 13:14].

e. For many interpreters, the divine *HESED* really began on Sinai - when the divine goodness always had to be shown in a context of continuing infidelity on

the part of the People specially chosen and loved by God. repeatedly the God of Israel is challenged to forgive and forget, to pardon and move on, to lead His people with beneficent love and forgiveness. When the first Covenant was broken, Ex 34 is the record of its restoration, with the God of mercy and kindness, slow to anger, rich in compassion. There is in this the combination of the masculine *HESED* combining with the tenderness of a mother's womb. The Covenant of Sinai recurs throughout Israel's history [cf. Ps 86; 103:8; 145:8; Jl 2:13; Jon 4:2; Jr 9:23].

f. "Come to the water all you who are thirsty ... listen, listen to me, and you will have good things to eat...With you, I will make an everlasting covenant... I have made you a witness to the peoples ..." [cf. Is 55:1, ff.]. The New Jerusalem is coming, on the basis of a new Mercy Covenant. The only proper response is one that is recorded later, near the end of "Trito-Isaiah": "... Let me sing the praises of Yahweh's goodness, and of his marvelous deeds, in return for all the good he has done for us and for the great kindness he has shown us in his mercy and in his boundless goodness..." [cf. Is 63:7, ff.].

g. The Psalmists recognize the miracle of the divine goodness - far more powerful in His *HESED* that the terrible sin and apostasy of Israel: "... Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love is everlasting! Who can count all Yahweh's triumphs? Who can praise him enough? ... We have sinned quite as much as our fathers, we have been wicked, we are guilty..." [cf. Ps 106:1, 7]. "... Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, his love is everlasting ... let us thank God for his love, for his marvels on behalf of men; satisfying the hungry, he fills the starving with good things ... Let these thank Yahweh for his love..." [cf. Ps 107].

h. Eventually, these ideals universalized: while there is a strong nationalistic current throughout these writings, and international flavor may be noted: "... Acclaim Yahweh all the earth, serve Him gladly, come into His presence with songs of joy... Yes, Yahweh is good, his love is everlasting, his faithfulness endures forever..." [cf. Ps 100]. "...His wisdom made the heavens ... He set the earth on the waters ... He made the great lights.... for His love is everlasting! [cf. Ps 136]. "... The Lord God is merciful and tender-hearted, slow to anger, very loving, and universally kind; Yahweh's tenderness embraces all his creatures..." [cf. Ps 145:7, ff.].

i. And finally, these principles "eschatologized"! - the special covenant that protected David was perpetuated by the Temple singers and musicians. By the liturgical chant and psalmody, through the succeeding generations Israel recognized the divine *HESED* and looked upon it as the ultimate explanation of creation, redemption, sanctification: "... Blessed be the Yahweh of Israel, from all eternity and for ever! Here, all the people are to say: AMEN! [cf. Ps 106:48]."... Praise the Lord, all you nations, extol Him, all you peoples. For his love is strong, His faithfulness eternal..." [cf. Ps 117]. "...Let the House of Israel ... of Aaron ... those who fear

Yahweh say it: His love is everlasting! [cf. Ps 118]. "... Pay tribute to Yahweh, families of the peoples, tribute to Yahweh, of glory and power... Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, His love is everlasting..." [cf. I Ch 16: 8, ff. - a copy of Ps 105]. "... [The Lord takes possession of His Temple, an elaboration of 1 K 8:10, ff. - with emphasis on the part of music]... 120 priests accompanied the Levitical cantors on the trumpet... all who played, or sang, gave glory to God. Lifting their voices to the sound of the trumpet and cymbal and instruments of music, they gave praise to Yahweh: 'for he is good, his love is everlasting'..." [cf. I Ch 5:12, ff.; cf. 7:1, ff.]. [cf. Glueck, pp. 7, ff.].

j. While it is true that much of God's mercy can be expressed in family terms, due to the use of the root word to describe it, meaning the maternal womb. The challenge here would be that those born from the same womb, would have the natural feelings of pity for the misfortunes of a sibling who has met with misfortune - or, on the part of God, the feelings of a mother for her child in difficulty. Therefore, divine mercy is described:

- as parental love for a child [cf. Ps 103:13; Is 63: 15, f.; Jr 31:20];
- it is a father's solicitude for his infant [Ho II];
- a loving mother [cf. Is 49:1;] – who has just weaned her child [cf. Ps 131];
- a brother in law, who raises up a family in divine observance of the Law of Levirate;
- or, simply a husband who deeply loves his wife [cf. Hos 1-3; Is 54].

m. It assumes many manifestations:

- God's continuing concern for the Covenant and His People;
- it often comes across as simple forgiveness, the restoration of friendship [cf. Dt 13:17; 2 S 24:14; 2 K 13:23; Ps 25:6; 40: 11; 51: 1; 79:8; 103:4; Is 54: 8; 55:7; Lm 3:32; Dn 9:9; Ho 1:6,f.; Jl 2:18; Mi 7:19; Hb 3:2; Zc 1:12,ff.];
- liberation from enemies [cf. Ne 9:27, f.; Ps 25:6; 40:11; 69:16; 79:8; Is 30: 18; Jr 42:14];
- restoration and home-coming [cf. Dt 30:3; Jr 33:26];
- fulfillment of His promises of generosity [cf. Dt 13:17; Jr 33:16];
- the New Covenant in Divine Mercy [cf. Jr 31; 31-33];
- the wonder of feeding His people for 40 years in the desert, and water from the stone [cf. Ne 9:19; Is 49:10];

- restoration of communion [cf. 2 K 13:23; Ho 2:19, 23].

n. Despite the national sense of sinfulness, the people were convinced that they could call upon Divine Mercy at any time [cf. Ps 51; 57:1; 79:8; 86:16; 123:2; Is 33:2; Dn 9:18] This confidence was based on the divine *HESED* as Israel had repeatedly been given the divine guarantee to God's loyalty, compassion. Because God had taken the initiative in establishing the Covenant, Israel confidently trusted in Him. Israel had no reason to expect anything different due to the repeated "Exodus Antiphon", **the God of Israel is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, rich in kindness, abounding in steadfast love** [cf. Ex 20:5,f.; 34:6; Nb 14:18; Dt 5:9,f.; 7:7,ff.; 2 Ch 30:9; Ne 1:5; 9:17; Pss 51:1,f.; 86:5,15; 100:4,f.103:8; 111:3,ff.;112:1,ff.; 116:5; 130:7,f.; 145: 8; Jl 2:13; Jr 32:17,f.; Dn 9:8,ff.; Jon 4:2; Na 1:2,f.;Si 2:10,f.].

o. In the end, when all of history would have run its course, the divine mercy would still be "there" [cf. Is 14:1; 49:13; 54:7; Jr 12:15; 33:26; Ezk 39:25; Zc 1:16]. Mercy is the basis of eschatological hope.

p. This magnificent OT concept of the divine mercy is carried over into the NT. God's loving loyalty is present in Lk's opening chapter, in the beautiful canticles of the *Benedictus*, *Magnificat*, *Nunc Dimittis* [cf. Lk 1:50, 54, 72, 78]. St. Peter speaks of it to those baptized into Christ Jesus:"... Once you were not a people at all and now you are the People of God; once you were outside the mercy and now you have been given mercy..." [cf. I P 2:10; Ho 2:23]. The NT terminology will only be understood in the light of the OT revelation:

"... Happy the merciful, they shall have mercy shown to them..." [cf. Mt 5:7]

"... Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings by offering your bodies as a living sacrifice, truly pleasing to God..." [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.].

"... what matters is for a person to become an altogether new creature. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule..." [cf. Ga 6:16].

"... But God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy; when we were dead in our sins, he brought us to life with Christ..." [cf. Ep 2:4]

"... From Paul, the Apostle of Christ Jesus, ... wishing you grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus, our Lord..." cf. 1 Tm 1:2].

"... remember it is those who had endurance that we say are the blessed ones. You have heard of the patience of Job, and understood the Lord's purpose, realizing that the Lord is kind and compassionate..." [cf. Jm 5:11]

“... Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth as his sons, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we might have a sure hope, and the promise of an inheritance...” [cf. I P 1:3]

“... From Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James; to those who are called, to those who are dear to God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ wishing you all mercy and peace and love...” [cf. Jude 2].

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[II] THE DIVINE SON

1. The Sacred Heart and “the Mind of Christ Jesus”

“... Come to me all you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for **I am gentle and humble in heart** and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light...” [cf. Mt 11:28-30].

“... **In your minds** you must be the same as Christ Jesus ... who emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave... he was humbler yet... even to accepting death... on a cross...But God raised him high ... to the glory of God the Father...” [cf. Ph 2:5, ff.].

[NB: a varied English translation of Ph 2:5:

... **In your minds, you must be the same as Christ Jesus...** [JB - - 1966 edition] - this will be the Bible used for this course, unless otherwise noted].

“... Have this **mind** among yourselves which was in Christ Jesus...” [RSV – Catholic Edition]

“... Make your own the **mind** of Christ Jesus...” “[NJB - 1986 edition].

“... Have this **mind** among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus...” [NOB - with Apocrypha - 1973, 1976].

“... Your **attitude** must be that of Christ...” [NAB - 1970 edition].

“... Have among yourselves the same **attitude** that is also yours in Christ Jesus...” [CSB - 1986 edition].

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Premise: [for what follows, cf. Jozef HERIBAN, *Retto PHRONEIN e KENOSIS. Studio esegetico su Fil 2:1-5. 6-11.* Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose 51. Roma: LAS 1983, pp. 170-209; 379-399 - passim].

[1] ¶ Paul is recommending to the Church of Philippi of 2000 years ago - as well as to the Church of TODAY - the proper attitude needed to face the struggles that come to them from the outside, as well as from the tendency to divisions within - these are a few but fundamental attitudes of the Christian life.

[2] Before all else, the faithful believer is being asked to conduct him/herself in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the particular situation in which the Philippians find themselves, this ideal needs to be translated and manifested, by being solid in the one and the same spirit, with one soul in the common struggle to live the faith.

[3] This firmness and unity will only be fully achieved eschatologically - because it is an efficacious sign willed by God and is part of the "salvation" brought by Jesus Christ - that all might indeed be one. The present struggles of believers consist in their sharing in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. This is defined as a particular gift, and is seen to be simply as part and parcel of Christian "faith", the following/imitation of Jesus Christ, or the "putting on of His mind".

[4] With a view to its eschatological fulfillment of the entire work of the grace of God, faithful believers are being challenged not only to believe in God, and in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit - but also to accept all their sufferings with a view to Him. Each one is being asked to sustain his/her AGONIA *with* the same spirit with which Paul sustained it in Philippi when he was among the readers/ listeners to his letter - and as he is presently doing in his prison, as this is one of his Letters from Captivity.

[5] To understand Paul's ideal of "putting on the Mind of Christ Jesus" it is very helpful to look at the context from the preceding chapter - and then look more fully at the *KENOSIS*.

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a. **The Context of the preceding Chapter:** "...Avoid anything in your every day lives that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come to you and see for myself, or stay at a distance and only hear about you, I shall know that you are unanimous in meeting the attack with firm resistance, united by your love for the faith of the gospel and quite unshaken by your enemies. This will be the sure sign that they will lose and you will be saved. It would be a sign from God that he has given you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well. You and I are together in the same fight as you saw me fighting before and,

as you will have heard, I am fighting still..." [cf. Ph 1:27-30, concluding lines of Chapter I].

a. Paul is encouraging the Philippians to have the proper attitude before a hostile world that does not support the followers of Jesus Christ. From this pressure from the outside, Paul appeals for a mutual attitude within the community that would distance the constant and real threat of disunion. This threat was very active at that moment among the Philippians. Paul's remedy is that all go on in the quest for a life truly worthy of the gospel. He translates this to a particular, the culmination of the message of Jesus: that all remain united in the one spirit - that all struggle as a single heart and soul for the faith, accepting the sufferings of Jesus Christ in their lives as a gift of grace. This appeal for the Church of Philippi to stay together is continued here, but developed further and fathomed more deeply, particularly regarding the moving cause of **the evangelical attitude** necessary for true believers: a unity in action and a community life that can only be maintained when there is harmony in intention and sentiment. This is Paul's insistence on "the mind of Christ Jesus": external unity is based on interior love and appreciation of one another.

b. These ideals from Ph 1 are then linked to the opening verses of chapter 2. What most scholars hold is that the "**Christological Hymn**" [cf. Ph 2:6-11] does not fall "out of the sky", but is carefully introduced by these first verses of c. 2, as well as by the last verses of the preceding chapter. They present a kind of an "overture" to the "symphony" of the Ode, the "Carmen" honoring Jesus Christ. The indications of this kind of "prolepsis", or thrust forward might be noted as follows:

- there is a series of identical terms, as the double "in Christ" in v. 1 and repeated in v. 5;
- the underlying, over-riding strong appeal to fraternal unity;
- this is based on gospel faith and a humble and self-less manner of thinking, a "disinterestedness" in the best sense of that term;
- this will all be supported by Paul's introduction of a HAPAX LEGOMENA, the *KENOSIS* of Jesus Christ.

The language experts tell us that these initial verses of Ph 2 present real difficulties:

- the phrases are rather elliptic, even with the omission of the verbs;
- their meaning is uncertain and no translation of the original text is ever agreed to by all.

b. Ph 2:1: - “... If our life in Christ means anything to you - if love can persuade at all - or the Spirit that we have in common - or any tenderness or sympathy...”

a. This verse is characterized by rather vague terminology because of their general application. The four “reasons”, or “titles” for harmony that Paul notes here, allow for a broad interpretation. There is present here the *PARAKLESIS* - that encouragement inspired by the Holy Spirit, a ministry, based on the Scriptures, in which Paul and Barnabas would excel as recorded in Acts [cf. Ac 4:31, 36; 11:22,ff.; Rm 15: 4, f., etc.]. An encouraging discourse is *PARANESIS*, a vibrant part of this over-all Mission of Encouragement.

b. Paul is basing his argument on four Christian realities: **Christ** does mean something; **love** can persuade; the **Spirit** is present, and there is tenderness. Paul’s argument is that the Philippians know these as well as he does. The understanding of these spiritual values in some ways is “up for grabs” and in our time would be wide open to a wide variety of interpretations. The following points seem to be accepted in a general way:

1.] The reality on which Paul is basing his exhortations would be his own personal experience that he enjoyed when he was among the Philippians, and the love that all showed for him. The common interpretation has been that Paul is saying here that if once more you want to give me a consolation in Christ, an encouragement by means of your love, that you be with me in communion of the Holy Spirit, and if you want to show me your compassionate love in my present circumstances [he is in prison]: then, complete my joy. This was the common reading of this text, from the times of St. John Chrysostom. This view understands Paul’s idea as looking for encouragement from them - but, this does not seem to fit in well with the context as most would read it today. In fact, here the Apostle to the Gentiles is exhorting the Philippians to come together in their thinking, to have the same charity - and this is why he offers the four motivations present in this first verse of chapter 2. Their union can only be sought **in Christ**.

2.] These realities are the community experience among the Philippians to which Paul now makes reference: in some way, they have already had the experience of an exhortation in Christ, meaning: in the Church. They have received encouragement from fraternal charity, the spiritual communion and the shared sentiments of love, compassion. Paul’s joy will be complete, he is telling the Philippians, by intensifying their already present fraternal cohesion. This would seem to respect the “parenthetic” context of this entire segment. Paul is simply reminding them of the spiritual experience they all once enjoyed - but is more interested in their fraternal cohesion than in his own consolation.

3.] The realities to which Paul refers - based on his lived experience with the Philippians - in truth, are simply supernatural objective realities that flow right out of the Gospel: encouragement in Christ, in shared charity, in a communion of Spirit and in tender affection and compassion - these realities need to inspire all Christian morality. This is the ultimate expression of a **Paraclesis in Christ**. In this verse 1, Paul is making an urgent appeal to those objective realities that have as their source, Jesus Christ. **In Christ** is repeated twice: verse 1 and 5. This fiery exhortation should have re-echoed in the depths of the Philippians' hearts. It is from being **in Christ** that Paul's argument takes its strength. All of these verses [vv. 1-5] are a wind-up, a warming up, for the sublime *PARANESIS* that will be the Christological Ode, vv. 6-11. Paul wants the Philippians - as well as all of us - to cultivate the sentiments of Jesus Christ.

c. It will be helpful to ponder more deeply the "content" of Paul's *PARANESIS* here, his discourse of encouragement, a part of his over-all ministry, with Barnabas [the "son of encouragement"] called the *PARACLESIS*.

1.] What is of prime importance would be the very first phrase in this verse 1. We are dealing with a **Paraclesis in Christ**. This is a NT catechetical instruction, exhortation - with broad meaning and implications. In this context, we might see it as follows:

- it is an "apostolic exhortation", appealing for a proper life-style and conduct;
- it is also a consolation being sent out to someone in a situation of great pain;
- it is also a supplication and appeal when it is placed in the context of a truly difficult situation, or for the undertaking of a most important mission, or commitment.

a.] All of the above may "fit": Paul is consoling the Church by orientating their meditation toward the Person of Jesus Christ. Only in Him can we find the source of the sole consolation that matters. The only valid consolation within the Church is a strengthening, deepening, intensifying of the theological life. It can also be understood that Paul is offering an "apostolic exhortation" that is truly centered on the Person of Jesus Christ. Paul appeals to the faithful to take very seriously our vocation to share communion "in Jesus Christ."

b.] While there are some consoling, and comforting elements in Paul's message, his real emphasis here is on an apostolic exhortation in the line of this verse: "... I do ask you brothers, to take these words of advice [exhortation] kindly; that is why I have written to you so briefly.." [cf. Heb 13:22, almost the conclusion]. As Paul had before his eyes, the real fear that the church would fall apart, he is inspired to send this *PARANESIS* - this is a pressing appeal that

he sends. This is sent to the young Church, in the name of Christ, with a truly persuasive eloquence. He almost seems to be sending with his missive the strength to accept his letter, and to carry out what it contains. Paul is trying to tell them that his letter is not inspired just by his own personal feelings, or desires - this is an inspiration from Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore a “paranesis in Christ” is not only a message, but is indeed an eloquent word.

2.] This is an encouragement [PARAMUTHION] in charity: - this is another one of those very rare words of which Paul makes such use in this letter - it occurs only in this passage.

a.] In profane Greek, it is more or less synonymous with *PARAKLESIS* but the two terms are really not interchangeable. The word being considered here means to speak to another in friendly tones - this would make it a friendly apostolic exhortation. - its purpose is to encourage, to assure, and to offer comfort. Some see the noun form of the word to mean: consolation, comfort, a certain lenience. There is no real Hebrew equivalent, but in the LXX the Greek word is used to render these lines: “... Judas Maccabaeus remained confident that the Lord would stand by him. He urged his men not to be dismayed by the attacks of the pagans, but to keep in mind the help that had come to them from heaven in the past, to be confident that this time also victory would be theirs with the help of the Almighty. He put fresh heart into them, citing the Law and the Prophets, and by stirring up memories of the battles they had already won and filled them with new enthusiasm...” [cf. 2 M 15: 7.ff.].

b.] There are a number of recorded uses of this ideal in the NT:

“... many Jews came to Martha and Mary to sympathize with them over their brother... when the Jews who were in the house sympathizing with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there...” [cf. Jn 11:19, 31].

“... You can remember how we treated every one of you as a father treats his children, teaching you what was right, encouraging you and appealing to you to live a life worthy of God, who is calling you to share the glory of his kingdom...” [cf. 1 Th 2:11, ff.].

“... Be at peace among yourselves. And this is what we ask you to do, brothers: warn the idlers, give courage to those who are apprehensive, care for the weak and be patient with everyone...” [cf. I Th 5:14].

For what pertains to the charism of prophet, such a charismatic speaks to them for their edification, exhortation, and comfort:

“...On the other hand, the man who prophesizes does talk to other people, to their improvement, their encouragement and their consolation...” [cf. 1 Co 14:3].

From these citations it can be noted how this rare word is used in contexts of a friendly apostolic exhortation. This is the role of friendly persuasion, and immediate stimulus, the offering of incentive.

c.] Just like the *PARAKLESIS*, this latter “encouragement” has its ultimate foundation in Jesus Christ and is offered in His Name. Like the former, it is also based on, and is inspired by charity: it is, in fact, the friendly encouragement of charity. It ought to evoke and arouse that force of encouragement to carry out all that charity possesses [cf. 2 Co 5:14]. In this expression, there is a nuance of intimacy, true gentleness that speaks to the depths of one’s heart. The *AGAPE* always offers the advice of doing no violence - it persuades forcefully, but gently, by offering good thoughts. It gives assurance, encouragement - it inspires and exerts gentle pressure on the Christian, but always in serenity and the fullness of happiness.

d.] In our passage in question, Paul is surely referring to fraternal charity of which both Paul and the Philippians had previously had a shared experience. This seems to be the emphasis of the context even more than the love that Jesus Christ has for the Philippians: this seems to be the dimension of the *AGAPE* to which Paul refers here. Paul teaches consistently that in the Christian community what gives the tonality is always charity. Charity always has within itself the persuasive power to move and to orientate the conduct of the individual believers to fraternal union and harmony. So, friendly, apostolic encouragement is the sign of that love which is an essential part of the foundations for the community that finds its total realization in Jesus Christ.

3.] This community life and fraternal union is considered to be the Communion in the Holy Spirit: *KOINONIA PNEUMATOS* : This “Communion of the Holy Spirit” is a “Genitive of Participation” - which means that all in the community are participants in the Holy Spirit.

a.] The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and in each one of the faithful in a particular way, through *AGAPE*: “...I beg you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Spirit to help me through my dangers by praying to God for me...” [cf. Rm 15:30]. Thanks to this possession of the Spirit, the faithful are united among themselves in a spiritual and intimate society:

“... the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God, by calling you has joined you to his Son,

Jesus Christ; and God is faithful..." [cf. I Co 1:9]. - "... The blessing cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ..." [cf. 1 Co 10:16]. - "...The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." [conclusion to 2 Co 13:13].

b.] Some interpreters might "force" the reading just a bit when they see here at least an implicit reference to the Trinity; AGAPE - *CHRISTOS* - *PNEUMA*. There are those who would see here either an implicit allusion to the Trinity - while others hold for an explicit Trinitarian formula. It is true that the Father is the ultimate source of charity - but, the connection with Him is not made in specific manner in this passage. The more probable interpretation is that Paul is referring to the sentiments that motivate [or, should!] the Philippians - what they nourish for him, and what should be in vogue among themselves. They are encouraged to have "tenderness and compassion" for one another.

4.] This "tenderness and sympathy [or, compassion]" is difficult to exegete. These are terms that Paul often uses, but to some readers their use here seems a bit out of the usual.

a] "Tenderness" is usually connected with what is most noble in human beings, the deepest sentiments of one's heart, for example. Physically, it would include lungs, kidneys, the spleen, or the "innards" of a human being - one's "gut" feeling, "heart of hearts". However, some of these organs are also associated with the most instinctual passions, such as anger, desire and love. . With the passing of time, the term is often compared with the generic but profound "**heart**." This implies the center of one's sensation and sentiments. In the LXX it appears 15 times and the verb, twice: the substantive in two passages appears in a kind of "translated sense: "... The virtuous man looks after the lives of his beasts..." [cf. Pr 12:10] - "... If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat - if thirsty, give him something to drink..." [cf. Pr 26:22]. It is found more commonly in apocryphal texts that would be more prevalently in Greek - it came to mean "maternal womb."

b.] In the NT, only Paul uses the substantive: but, like other terms [such as; *KARDIA*, *NOUS*] the word indicates in Paul "the entire human person", considered, though, under his/her capacity to love. The often used translation is **heart** and this is correct - provided that one understands from this that Paul means all that flows from the heart, as the most intimate expression of a human being. It means the most central core, the nucleus of a human being: "... Corinthians, we have spoken to you very frankly - our mind has been opened in front of you...I speak as if to children of mine..." [cf. 2 Co 6:11, ff.]. - "... [Titus'] own personal affection for you is all the greater when he remembers how willing you have all been, and with what deep respect you welcomed him..." [cf. 2 Co 7:15]. - "...

I am so delighted, and comforted, to know of your love; brother, you have put **new heart** into the saints... I am sending Onesimus back to you, and with him, I could say - a part of my own self ... I am counting on you in the Lord; put **new heart** into me, in Christ..." [Phm 7, 12, 20]. In Philipians, Paul is using the word in a translated sense, and he means: "love", "affection" - with the connotation of tenderness that comes from the experience among the faithful.

c.] The second word of the pair here is: "sympathy, compassion." [OIKTIRMOI] - some would pair these two as a kind of hendiadys as merciful love, the sympathy of tenderness, tender compassion. However, many see the entire passage as somewhat solemn, redundant, and the usual translation is by two substantives: tenderness and sympathy. This is not so much the divine compassion, as it is that deep bond that unites the faithful among themselves, and with Paul. This is a most profound reality, from the deepest part of a human being's capacity for affection. The emphasis on sym-pathy, com-passion forcefully emphasizes the strength of this relationship in Christ. The implication is that this is all **a participation in God's own mercy**: the affection that unites believers has its basis in God's mercy for us all. Therefore, Paul is remembering that wonderful mercy that the Philipians knew already from their own personal experience in their local church. This is always a Gift of the Holy Spirit.

d.] This dynamic verse poses many questions for interpretation. However anyone would read these "dynamite words", his whole exhortation is based upon that historical reality which is **Jesus Christ: "In Christ"** is the ultimate foundation for his entire exhortation here. Paul will make an "ethical-paradigmatic" use of this in His Christological *Carmen Christi*.

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c. **Ph 2:2:** "... be united in your convictions -united in your love - with a common purpose - and with a **common mind**. That is one thing that would make me completely happy..." Before Paul begins his concrete instruction, based on the four Christian realities, he places as his premise a motivation of his own: to make his own joy complete. This "joy" is not to be understood of Christian joy in general, but that special state of mind Paul enjoyed, his "apostolic joy": as he prays always for them in joy [cf. Ph 1:4]. It does seem that something in Philippi had caused him unhappiness - something is threatening their peace [cf. Ph 1:27; 2:14; 4:2]. It does seem that once he had known real happiness in their presence - this Church had been his joy and crown [cf. Ph 4:1]. This joy needs completion - this could come only if they could once gain be united in their sentiments. For Jn, perfect joy will be had only when Jesus returns [cf. Jn 3:29; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; I Jn 1:4; 2 Jn 12]. Paul is deeply worried about their disunion - there is an absence of accord in their thoughts and sentiments because of the rivalry and personal ambitions afoot in the

community: this is the “Achilles heel” among the Philippians. Paul is exhorting them - appealing to them that they have a common mind. He is doing all he can to emphasize the gravity of his appeal.

a. The Meaning of the Verb: “to have a common mind”:

1.] This is one of those very rich Greek verbs, difficult to translate by a single even polyvalent word. Very often, its context invades its meaning. This is almost a study apart - it appears 27 times in the NT and 24 of these are in Paul - its adjectival form appears 14 times, and 5 of these are in Paul - the noun form is rare [cf. Lk 1:17; Ep 1:8; Rm 8:6, twice; 7:27; 1 Co 14:20 - twice]. In the negative form, it appears 11 times, and 8 of these are in Paul.

2.] Many scholars tried to offer a definition - and perhaps it is from the complexity of their findings that some kind of an idea could be had:

- William Barclay: translate the verb as “the complete mental attitude of a person.” This verb means not just some passing thought of an individual, or just an aspect of his/her attitude. [This opinion, however, is only partially true: Barclay accentuates only the intellectual aspect of the Greek idea - but, the meaning is much more broad].

- Rudolf Bultmann: is much closer to the understanding of the verb: he sees it as that manner of feeling, judging, in which thinking and willing constitute a unity. This is what is meant here - the harmony between thought and affectivity. This unity is what conditions the “common mind”, including the entire manner of the feelings of a person.

- F. C. Porter: sees a further element here: this is not only intellectual or affective - but involves the entire mysterious realm of feelings, the total attitude of the psychological “ego”, the “inner self” - involving one’s whole personality in regard to others. This is the interior attitude of a person in so far as it involves the integral person - this is what determines his/her taking a position in the face of the realities and decisions of daily existence - this is what conditions a person’s entire exterior interpersonal conduct.

- C. Spicq, OP: this is a word that is used to translate one’s entire faculty of thinking and feeling - it involves intentions and will, opinions and estimations, one’s entire “life-style”, one’s deepest disposition as a human being. It is the inspiration of a human being’s simple day to day decisions, plans and hopes - this is one’s total psychological reaction in consort with others.

- J. Murray: notes an essential addition that sheds light on all of the above. Paul’s use of this ideal is always in intimate interdependence between the being a

Christian [expressed with a variety of terms: “in Christ” - “in the Spirit” - “in the faith” - the opposite to all this are these expressions: “in the flesh” - “in sin” - “in death”] - and one’s response to this in correspondence. This is always manifest - and this is the key to its interpretation: - in one’s external conduct Paul often uses this verb in his exhortations for believers ‘fundamental disposition of faith [cf. Rm 8:5-7]. In the negative sense, Paul uses *PHRONEIN* to express when his readers do not have that proper Christian interior attitude [cf. Rm 12:3; 14:6]. Paul uses this sense in two passages in his letter to the Philippians [cf. 3:15, 19]: “... if you see things differently, God will make it clear to you ... they are proudest of things they ought to think shameful...”

Summary: Any attempt to summarize these elements is indeed a challenge: the “common mind” according to Paul, to “nourish the same sentiments” - to put on the same mind, attitude - indicate the interior and dynamic mind-set of a human being, which is the result of the global interaction of three elements: the activity of human reason - the determination brought by the human will moved by grace - and the deepest sentiments of the human **heart** based on their new being in Christ Jesus. Their thoughts, their aspirations, their sentiments cannot be separated from their being in Jesus Christ: this is the Fundamental Option of their entire lives. The Sacred Heart [God’s merciful love] goes from being “A” value in life - to an “IMPORTANT” value - yearning for it to be **THE** value.

Paul’s use of this unusual verb is generally noted as applied to that authentic, or negatively, to that false attitude of believers in their living of their ecclesial commitments. What the Apostle presented to the Philippians and to the Romans is a Christ-like mind-set, the identical interior intonation that is expressed in concrete activities for the development of their community life.

b. A Frequent Pauline Expression: “... I appeal to Evodia and I appeal to Synteché to **come to agreement with each other, in the Lord...**” [cf. Ph 4:2] - “... In the light of the grace that I have received I want to urge each one among you not to exaggerate his real importance, each of you must judge himself soberly **by the standard of faith God has given him**... never be condescending, but make real friends with the poor...” [cf. Rm 12:3, 16]. - “... And indeed everything that was written long ago in the scriptures was meant to teach us something about hope from the examples scripture gives of how people who did not give up were helped by God. And may he who helps us when we refuse to give up help you all to be tolerant with each other, **following the example of Christ Jesus** - so that **united in mind** and voice you may give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...” [cf. Rm 15:4, ff.] - “... In the meantime, brothers, we wish you happiness; try to grow perfect; help one another; **be united**; live in peace; and the God of love and peace

will be with you ... The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all..." [cf. 2 Co 13: 11, ff.].

1.] There is a particular use Paul makes of this expression in Rm and Ph - there are great similarities in these Letters not only because of the immediate context of the expression of "putting on the same mind as Christ Jesus" - but also for the entire context. In both communities there is a common element of discord because of the exaggerated esteem some may have of themselves. There is periodically a superiority complex, and a tendency to vain glory. To overcome this Paul recommends the "mind of faith", the "sentiments of Christ Jesus": devotion needs to be imitation: "devotion is nothing else but the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God" [St. Thomas II - II, q. 82, a. 1, c.].

2.] In writing to the Rm, Paul's appeal is that they should not have excessive esteem of themselves, but should be content with a genuine and moderate self-estimation. Each one needs to know his own limitations, and this affords the basis of overcoming any spiritual pride. Each needs to know his/her limitations and this affords the basis of one's conduct towards others. Paul appeals to the Romans never to be condescending, and never allow oneself to be self-satisfied [cf. Rm 12:16]. This text is very close to the one we are considering, Ph 2:2-4:

- in both texts, Paul pleads that they have the same sentiments toward each other - as they are meant to be living a community life in their new faith **in Jesus Christ**;
- Paul wants to correct any hint of personal ambition - and invites the mentality that allows them to be drawn to the lowly and the humble;
- self-criticism, in a healthy way, and humble thoughts can go far to safeguard the unity and fraternal charity of the community.

3.] These are exhortations that Paul directs toward the two early communities - a charitable humility and the proper self-esteem are qualities that go a long way to helping solidify community life. The exhortation to Christ-like humility and charity here is offered as the safeguard to community life. All morality/spirituality needs to be based on the example of **Jesus Christ, meek and humble of heart**. The challenge of the Church is to correspond to the mind/heart of Jesus Christ - this is a supreme gift of God. No matter what else a community may lack, if it can rally around this central mentality of Jesus Christ, it will have all it needs. Such unity and harmony really is for the greater glory of God - and this is an absolute pre-requisite for them. The ultimate model, paradigm - exemplary cause - is Jesus Christ.

4.] “To put on the mind” - “to assume the same sentiments”: these are a kind of technical paraphrasing, or circumlocution to mean: “to be in harmony with” - “to be in total agreement” with the Lord Jesus, with Faith. This is a paranesis of profound humility of the *KENOSIS*, that Paul sees as essential in the pursuit of perfect charity, the vocation of every church community. This “correct”, “Christ-like” state of mind, mind-set, attitude: has many enemies. This is always a gift of God, a grace, to be sought in prayer and deepened by correspondence with the gift through asceticism. The ultimate “attitude-mind” of Jesus Christ is made known to us in His *KENOSIS*. In his appeal to the two women: Evodis and Synteché - and whatever their difficulty was - Paul generalizes and makes their common attitude one meant for the whole church - of our own times as well.

c. The meaning of this verse 2: “... be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind...”: grammatically, these are four participles:

1.] The charity that is referred to here is “fraternal” - this always enables one to think less of oneself and his/her own struggles, and leads one to be more and more “other” centered. This is the ideal of the same chapter as the one that presents the Beatitudes: “... pray for those who persecute you - in this way you will be children of your Father for He causes His sun to rise on bad men as well as the good... **you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect...**” [cf. Mt 5:43, ff.] - this is the ancient **Law of Holiness** [cf. Lv 19: 2+], re-[phrased in Lk to include mercy: “**Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate...**” [cf. Lk 6:36]. Such Christ-like efforts offer an invincible benevolence toward others. Whatever may be their conduct in our regard. This is not some simple pious feeling - but, it is a decisive act of the will, a hard-won conquest over self. This is the goal the entire Church needs to seek, and for which we have the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The same sentiments toward another - means to live out the charity of Jesus Christ which even includes enemies. Without the life-long pursuit of perfect charity, life in common falls [cf. 1 Co 14:1; 16:14; Ep 1:15; 3:17-29] - the up-building of the Body of Christ can only happen in this asceticism of love [cf. 1 Co 8:1; 2 Th 1:3; Ep 4:16; Col 2:2].

2.] To “charity”, Paul adds another one of his hapax *biblicum*, a totally unknown term that could be translated: “be unanimous” - **having one heart and soul** - to live one life, sharers in one and the same life **in Christ**. The Church is indeed the Body of Christ, and the “Summaries” of the Acts of the Apostles describes this aptly: “... These remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles - to the brotherhood - the breaking of the bread - and to the prayers..... the faithful all lived together and owned everything in common - they went as a body to the Temple...” [cf. Ac 2:37, ff.] - “... ¶ the whole group of believers was **united, heart and soul**... the

apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord..." [cf. Ac 4:32-35]. The ideal is this unity, toward which we tend, struggle, for as long as time lasts.

3.] The extent of this unity has been the occasion a long struggle of interpretation - perhaps negatively it would mean that there would be no relevant differences among the faithful. The fact is that Paul repeats the same thing two separate times, and the second rendition seems to strengthen the first. Some would hold that it would suffice if there was some kind of general disposition that would hold the believers together. Others opt for the view that Paul is hinting at the fundamental option of Christian mentality. Others hold that it is necessary to "zero in" on some particular point: this seems to be the mind of Christ Jesus.

4.] More and more scholars look forward to the verse that holds the word KENOSIS, as indicating the "core" of the mind of Jesus Christ. Whether it is the charity of Christ Himself - or whether, his "**constitutional humility**" - His eternal carrying out the Word of the Father - is not totally clear. The "mind" of Jesus Christ is mysteriously present in His Self-emptying.

d. **Ph 2:3:** "... there must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself..." What has upset this young community is vainglory and contention among the various factions. Here Paul suggests that each one think once in a while about the gifts the others have - he is suggesting a kind of "**fraternal humility**." There are some attitudes that will always be hostile to family, community - and Paul hopes that the Philippians will root them out of their midst.

a. "Rivalry" has been mentioned earlier in this letter: "... other [preachers] proclaim Christ for jealous or selfish motives..." [cf. Ph 1:17]. This seems to be a matter of personal ambition. The ideal that Paul is hoping for is that no one's personal interests go above the need of unity in the Church. "Vainglory" seems to be that concept of wanting to be able always to vindicate one's own honor. It is "a vain quest for personal glory". There is always room, and the challenge, to develop one's own talents: there are many antinomies in the Christian way: submission with creativity - humility with the development of one's gifts; dying to live. The proper vision of oneself is noted in Mary's *MAGNIFICAT* - the Lord saw my **lowly** state, and **He** raised me on **high**. There is never a place for any "triumphalism" in the earthly sojourn Church. Paul's view of glory seems directed either toward God - or, toward the after - life: "...May you always recognize what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ - when you will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God..." [cf. Ph 1:10, ff.] - "... every tongue should acclaim: Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God the Father..." [cf. Ph 2:11] - "... my God will fulfill all your

needs, in Christ Jesus as lavishly as only God can. Glory to God our Father, for ever and ever. Amen!" [cf. Ph 4:19.ff.].

b. What Paul is suggesting here is his own brand of "**fraternal humility**": "... Always consider the other person to be better than yourself..." God has blessed each and every human being with unique - often hidden gifts - these gifts of God need recognition. The "Poor Whom Yahweh loves" are meant to be characterized by such religious sentiments. Paul "christianizes" some of the sentiments of the ancient ANAWIM, from whose number came Jesus, Mary. This attitude is often that of the Worshipper toward God - and needs to be the right attitude toward others: "... I have served the Lord with all humility, with all the trials and sorrows that came to me..." [cf. Ac 20: 19] - "... Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience..." [cf. Ep 4:2] - "...You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness, and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body... Always be thankful." [cf. Col 3:12, ff.]. - "...To the rest of you I say: do what the elders tell you, and wrap yourselves in humility to be servants of each other, because God refuses the proud and will always favor the humble. Bow down, then, before the power of God now, and he will raise you up on the appointed day - unload your worries on him, since he is looking after you. Be calm, be vigilant..." [cf. 1 P 5:5, ff.].

c. What Paul is teaching here is the old maxim: "... Shoulder my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble **in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light..." [cf. Mt 11: 28-30]. This rich passage needs reflection:

- to follow the Lord - a **Wisdom Christology**: this is the repeated OT ideal: "... The Lord replied I will go with you and I will give you rest..." [cf. Ex 33:12, ff.] - "... Listen, my son, and take my warning, do not reject my advice ... give your shoulder to the yoke [of wisdom] ... court her with all your soul... go after her and seek her, she will reveal herself to you ... For in the end, you will find rest in her... her yoke will be a golden ornament.. If you wish, my son, you can gain instruction..." [cf. Si 6:23-31] - "... Approach me, all you who desire me...they who eat me, will hunger for more, they who drink me, will thirst for more... whoever listens to me will never have to blush, whoever acts as I dictate will never sin.." [cf. Si 24:19] - "... Come close to me, you uninstructed, take your place in my school... I have opened my mouth and spoken... put your neck under Wisdom's yoke ... **may your souls rejoice in the mercy**

of God, may you never be ashamed for praising him. Do your work before the appointed time and he in his time will give you your reward..." [cf. Si 51:23, ff.].

Jesus is speaking here the way that Wisdom does, a most important element in "**Wisdom Christology**". Jesus is one with Wisdom that existed from [before] the beginning of the world [cf. Pr 8:1-21, 32-36; 9:4-6]. Jesus addresses especially the wearied like the Suffering Servant of old: "... the Lord has given me a disciple's tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the wearied, he provides me with speech. He wakes me each morning to hear, to listen like a disciple..." [cf. Is 50:4, ff.]. The wearied and the burdened are those weighed down under the Law, the responsibility of its demands. Jesus is calling people to Himself - this is what discipleship really means. Jesus is the ultimate Wisdom and Truth, equal to Yahweh Himself. The "rest" of which He speaks is immediate peace of mind of God's grace - and eternal "rest" and perpetual life at the end of time: "...we who have the faith, will have a place of rest... there must still be, therefore, a place of rest reserved for God's people, the seventh-day rest... we must do everything we can to reach this place of rest..." [cf. Heb 4:1-11].

- Come to Me, shoulder My yoke, learn from Me: Jesus invites us to follow His teaching as the ultimate interpretation of the *TORAH* - Wisdom calls all to obey the *TORAH* - so, here Jesus calls all to obey Him, to a discipleship of obedience, of acceptance of His loving Word, Heart. From Jesus, the *TORAH* is always now mediated through Him "Discipleship" will always mean being true to the teaching of Jesus Christ. There is needed a real personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

- His Meekness and Humility of Heart - A Prophetic Value: the opposite is to be hard and proud of heart - so, the Lord appeals for the meekness and humility of Israel's heart: "... perhaps Israel will listen and each one, turn from his evil ways... I shall relent..." [cf. Jr 26:5, ff.] - "... Jerusalem would never listen to the call, would never learn the lesson - she has never trusted Yahweh, never drawn near to her God..." [cf. Zp 3:2, f.]. By "negation", the Scriptures will apply the ideal virtues to Jesus, the New Israel: "...Rejoice heart and soul, Daughter of Zion! Shout with gladness, Daughter of Jerusalem! See now, your king comes to you, victorious, triumphant, humble and riding on a donkey, the foal of a donkey..." [cf. Zc 9:9]. This is the "Palm Sunday" scene [cf. Mt 21:5]. Jesus' meekness and humility of heart seem to be a reinforced synonym. There is a sharp contrast here between Jesus and those who will not accept Him, the "hard of heart", stiff-necked. The Pharisees always loved the places of honor [cf. Mt 23:5, ff.]. Jesus comes as the humble, Suffering Servant of the Lord. The Prophet had promised: "...Put yourselves on the ways of long ago.... Take the good way, and you will find rest...I posted look-outs on their behalf: Listen to the sound of the trumpet!"[cf. Jr 6:5, ff.] . "Rest" for the soul is that *SHALOM* , a deep and existential peace - this is the final sense of well-being with regard to one's

relationship with God and His Decalogue. This OT “rest” is very close to the NT “salvation” - what Mt has in 11:28-30 is very close to the biblical *MACARISMS* - those “*blessed are they*” - of the Beatitudes.

- Yes, My yoke is easy, and My burden light - **the New Law of Holiness**: In the context of the paraphrasing of the Law of Holiness, Jesus is recorded as saying: “... Instead, love your enemies and do good... you will have a great reward and you will be the sons of the Most High, for He Himself is **kind** to the ungrateful and the wicked. **Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate...**” [cf. Lk 6:34, ff.]. - “...You are new born, and like babies you should be hungry for nothing but milk - the spiritual honesty which will help you to grow up to salvation - now that you have tasted the goodness of the Lord...” [cf. I P 2:3, ff. - cf. Ps 34:8]. Those who follow other gospels will feel its weight - while those who will take up Jesus’ Cross each day, in the end, will find a kind yoke and a light burden. While there are many interpretations of the TORAH only Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life Jesus goes directly to the core meaning of the TORAH - Jesus is the Father’s best exegete.

- Jesus is the Word, the Law, the Teacher: Jesus cuts through the multiplication of all the legal prescriptions - He invites all to come to Him, to enter into a personal and deep relationship with Him, to follow Him, imitate Him, to be His disciple. He places His own Person at the center, and this is surprising. “He teaches with authority”. The way of Jesus promises eternal SHALOM - His is a brand new era. The Kingdom of Heaven is “realized eschatology” - this is a kind yoke, a light burden, and rest for all who have labored long and hard. [cf. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*. 33 A. *World Biblical Commentary*. Dallas: Word 1993, pp. 322-325, passim].

d. Fraternal Humility: Always consider the other person to be better than yourself: “to be better” might also be translated as that others really “prevail” by their qualities, gifts. Paul uses this phrase - and he alone - four times, and three of these in Ph - in addition to this v. 3 of c. 2:

1.] “... I believe that nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Jesus Christ...” [cf. Ph 3:8]. - this is the greatest gift of all, some experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ and His mercy - this is superior to all else. This implies a very personal, very deep interior attitude.

2.] “... There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your **hearts** and your thoughts in Christ Jesus...” [cf. Ph 4:7]. This is a practical judgment of esteem, and surpasses all other understanding.

e. There are many efforts to understand this passage regarding Fraternal Humility - that will be briefly considered here:

1.] Superiority in Grace: K. Barth understood this passage to mean that the Philippians should consider one another as a “grace from God”. This would mean that every one of the faithful - even without any other reason, and beyond all else - is infinitely superior, and therefore, worthy of all respect. This is more of a theological conclusion and applies St. Paul’s doctrine on grace - developed elsewhere - to this passage. As a result, many scholars do not follow him.

2.] A Spiritual and Moral Superiority: A considerable number of exegetes hold that the superiority to be noted in others is the basis of Paul’s appeal for Fraternal Humility. It is radicated in the real fact of the superiority of human qualities and Christian virtues among different believers. This view is that Paul here is referring to Christian perfection and to the holiness of life, a spiritual and moral superiority. Some base their argument on these words of Paul just up ahead: “... **Not** that I have become perfect **yet**; I have **NOT YET** won, but I am **still** running **trying** to capture the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me...I am **racing** for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us **upwards** to receive in Christ Jesus. We who are called ‘perfect’ must think in this way... let us go **forward** on the road that has brought us where we are...”[cf. Ph 3:12, ff.]. For these interpreters, arguing from this context of present “imperfection, Paul is challenging them to a humble state of mind, and one of admiring others among them. There are those interpreters, however, who reject this appealing interpretation - based on their reading of the *KENOSIS* which comes later - this is the absolute value, toward which all need to tend: we are all still trying to capture this crown - this is still further ahead along the road. While the *KENOSIS* hymn is often thought of as a Baptismal liturgy for Christians, there are very few scholars who think this is to be applied also to the “humiliation” of Jesus’ own baptism. The *KENOSIS* of Christ is a much deeper attitude.

3.] A Simple Attitude of Humble Altruism: this view states that Paul is making an appeal to the sublime “disinterested, self-less” love manifested by Jesus in the Christological hymn that follows here. This view looks to another text for support: “... Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich, but **he became poor for your sake**, to make you rich out of his poverty...” [cf. 2 Co 8:9]. This opinion does not emphasize so much a comparison with others - but simply that each one is simply to be inspired by them. A major difference, too, in the two *KENOSIS* passages [Ph 2:6, ff. and 2 Co 8:9] is that the latter has no reference for your sake. Rather, Paul’s presentation to the Philippians is the total *KENOSIS* of Jesus, which “**constitutes**” Him, and was **His sacrifice of love** manifesting His total Self-less, disinterested love in behalf of the Church at Philippi. Therefore, it is very hard for the interpreter to individuate just precisely what the “superiority” of others is.

4.] Be subject to all others: still other scholars read this challenge of Paul as his exhortation to the attitude according to which each one will think of him/herself as subject to all others, that others are their superiors, legitimate authorities. In this view, the faithful of Philippi are being challenged to imitate the attitude of Jesus Christ - even though He was of a divine condition, and enjoyed certain prerogatives in His equality with the Father, He nonetheless thought of these divine privileges as a good that He could surrender out of love for humanity. He “emptied Himself” of these, thus providing an example for all to consider some of their own privileges of status, or in society, in the same light - in order to draw closer to Christ. While this view, too, is appealing, it has not convinced everyone. It is not really made clear why this particular attitude of Jesus should be imitated - they are not being challenged, for example, to be baptized in the Jordan, even though Jesus was. Nonetheless, there is something very valuable in this opinion: whatever is one’s dignity, or superiority that he/she uses to advantage over others, this could be surrendered in the interests of charity, of putting on the mind of Jesus Christ. . Philippi is in trouble as a community because so many are holding on to their own reasons for superiority over others. Thus, Paul would be arguing from the present concrete situation of the Philippians.

Summary

[1] It has been noted above that these specific exhortations of Paul [cf. Ph 2:1-4] are a continuation and further specification of his over-all PARACLESIS that “spells out” what he had said above in 1:27: “... avoid anything in your every day lives that would be unworthy of the gospel...” From the terminology used, some interpreters are of the view that Paul is thinking much more of the conduct of the Philippians in public, and not so much in their private sphere. Paul challenges them to struggle on for the faith in one heart and soul. Whatever the general struggle within the Church of Philippi, two women [Synteché and Evodia] are pointed out. Paul refers back to their earlier service and their dedicated cooperation with him: “... these women were a help to me when I was fighting to defend the Good News - and so, at the same time, were Clement and the others. Their names are written in **the Book of Life...**” [cf. Ph 4:3, ff.] From Paul’s public appeal - it would only stand to reason that the dispute among these ladies was not some secondary, private matter - but, that their litigation against each other was having a deleterious effect on the Church. Whatever their disagreement was, it profoundly bothered the ecclesial peace. Paul issues his rather strong admonition to “let by-gones be by-gones!” From the context, many interpreters hold that these disorders had to do with “status”, rank, social position, community importance within the assembly. These two women - all of Philippi - and all of us: need to put on a more humble attitude, way of thinking - that is characteristic of Jesus Christ.

[2] Paul radicates his “moralizing” deeply in relationship to **the example of Jesus Christ**. There is an intimate connection between Paul’s spiritual exhortations and his dogmatic principles. This is never a mere casual coincidence, but is one that depends deeply on Paul’s thought. He uses the dogmatic hymn for his exhortations, and seeks to be most convincing, placing his ultimate argument by quoting what might have been a well known and very sublime liturgical hymn, or ode. Paul struggles against any false state of mind, or acting out of erroneous principles. What is supreme for all Christians is Jesus Christ. The faithful are powerfully exhorted to ponder, to live, translate the example of Jesus Christ.

[3] In this context, Paul is not talking about some speculative “common mind” - or, the maintaining of some opinion that might be the more favorable to the majority: perhaps a manipulated democracy becomes its own brand of tyranny. It may be that some ecclesial meetings might settle too easily what is “common sense”, that which would be agreeable to most tastes, or the reaching of some kind of generic consensus - the danger of “mediocrity” - “tepidity” is ever present. This is always the risk of choosing what people “like” - rather than what is really needed. Paul’s challenge is much more sublime - he is asking for an outside evaluation, “the mind of Jesus Christ”. While this “attitude” is something interior to the believer, it does manifest itself in external conduct. This humble state of mind is based on the Person of Jesus Christ - and leads to the disposition of knowing that in something, in qualities, every other person would have something that no other individual would possess.

[4] This implies the restraining of any self-centered ambition that of being considered “important” - to “have a name” - to enjoy broad esteem, a privileged existence, prestige in one’s circle. Paul’s theme is that those who allow themselves to be governed, “principled” by the “mind of Christ Jesus” would be those who really exercise the most important role in the Church. Believers who are “in Christ Jesus” do not engage in the struggle to get ahead, to take on the more important positions. These ideal individuals that Paul proposes are “content with their state”, and have in mind only the yearning to **be more Christ-like**, more intense in their Christian response. The true believer can only admire the person who truly has Christ-like qualities. In his classical Commentary on the Jesuit Constitutions, Fr. Francis Suarez [*De Religione Societatis Iesu*. Paris: Vives 1877, Tomus 16. Book 8, c. 8, p. 955 a] wrote that nothing could help love for another person more than to notice in the other those singular gifts of virtue and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to contemplate in the other how the image of God is painted in the other in **the most beautiful colors of divine grace**. What is very hard in community sharing might be a superiority complex - of which Paul seems to be in dread.

[5] This concept of an authentic “self-image” in Christ Jesus does not mean that anyone should literally hate him/herself. It certainly does not imply that the basic Christian attitude is for “losers”, or that one should think that he/she has little self worth. This does not imply either that no Christian would ever be able to strive for the “greater glory of God” by responding more fully to the graces instilled by the Creator. One of the Christian paradoxes is that while we are of the earth [*humus*] a divine breath, Spirit has been infused, inspired into us. St. John Chrysostom taught that one really has humility when, he/she has arisen to a lofty state, but who genuinely humbles him/herself. The model is Christ: Who did not profit by His equality with God - He did not make use of His privileges for His own personal ends, but only to carry out the will, word of the Father - and to develop His “glory.”

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e. Ph 2:4: “... [all this is] so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people’s interests instead...”

a. This verse continues what went before in spelling out the over-all theme of Paul’s Apostolic Exhortation thus far - verse 4 simply continues the concretization of the “common mind in Jesus Christ” that is the ideal presented to the Philippians in their context of two millennia ago - and to us in the early years of the third millennium. The grammatical introduction to verse 4 [“so that...”] would indicate the close connection with what has immediately preceded. The emphasis is placed on the positive admonition that moderates any sense of negativity that might have preceded. In the many necessities of daily life, the challenge is also to think of others.

b. This verse is a continuation of the themes just pondered - and in participial form, once more thinks of the attitude of real humility. This is made clear “by thinking of others as superior to oneself. The appeal is to think attentively, to fix one’s attention on what needs to be of real interest to the dedicated Christian: other people’s interests. The Greek verb is: *SKOPOUNTES* - leading to the English “scope”: as in “micro-”, “horo-”, “*EPISKOPE*” “over-seer”: “... be on your guard against anyone who encourages trouble or puts difficulties in the way of the doctrine you have been taught...” [cf. Rm 16:17] - “... It is all God’s work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation...” [cf. 2 Co 4:18] - “... if one of you misbehaves, the more spiritual of you who set him right should do so in a spirit of gentleness, not forgetting that you may be tempted yourselves...” [cf. Ga 6:1] - “... be united in following my way of life. Take as your models everybody who is already doing this and study them as you used to study us...” [cf. Ph 3:17]. The “thinking of others’/one’s own interests” - these “interests” could be one’s possessions, gifts, rights or points of view. There is a variety of views of what Paul meant by the word “interests” here:

1.] Some interpreters think this verse includes a new moral ethic: the “interests” to which Paul refers would be: the goods of the Philippians, whether spiritual or material: the verb would be translated in its basic meaning: to have in view, to look attentively. Therefore, Paul would be exhorting the Philippians not to seek their own interests or advantage primarily - but, also to have in mind those of others. This would be a kind of “long range” lesson in Christian ethics. Many do hold that this is what Paul had in mind.

2.] However, there is still another interpretation: what Paul has in mind here would be rather the spiritual qualities - the gifts of the others among whom they live: the verb would mean then: “to observe carefully”; “to take into consideration”; “to look attentively”; “to open their eyes and see”; “to pay attention to their gifts and qualities.” Paul is exhorting his readers to consider not only their own religious qualities as a Church in Philippi - but, that they should have a broader view, and look to the qualities of other Churches. Thus, no Church should be in competition with any other - but, rather, rejoice in the dedication of others - and whatever other superior qualities others might have.

Summary

[1] One draw-back of both these interpretations is that they seem to pay little heed to the context of the verses. First of all, Paul’s exhortations refer to the particular situation of the Philippians caused by their concrete, local problems. This leads some interpreters to think that maybe Paul is not so much interested in making general rules or interpretations of them, for universal Christian morality. The word “scope” seems to be something that “zeroes in” on a very particular, local matter - at least this is the understanding in the minds of some of the scholars who study these lines.

[2] The second opinion, according to other scholars, seems suddenly to make a kind of “leap” and begins to discuss the qualities and spiritual gifts of others to which there would be no other reference in the over-all context. The “superiority” here refers more to a kind of elevated grade, or level in society.

[a] The context does seem to suggest a situation in which individuals are overly insisting on their own rights proceeding from their position in the community. The implication then seems to be those advantages and privileges to which the Philippians cling, which are inherent to their social status, to their rank as believers. The genuine and real threat to unity within a community ordinarily would arise when each member is excessively immersed in his/her own interests - when one jealously defends his/her “space”, or property - or, when there are those who push to the fore their own talents, defend staunchly their own views. Paul had also pointed out [cf. Ph 1:17] that some missionaries were trying to diminish his authority

with a view to their own advantage. So, the context seems to present a kind of “vainglory” resulting from one’s own authority, or social status in the group. The true Paradigm, Model of the verb: “putting on the common mind” is **Jesus Christ**. The emphasis is placed on His renunciation of His own rights, that proceed from His “divine” status.

[b] Paul is asking for a very careful attention - to ponder deeply within one’s own mind and heart - that each one reflect very deeply on the present situation, all for the sake of unity in imitation of Jesus Christ: “...be united in following my rule of life...” [cf. Ph 3:17] - “.. so we have no eyes for the thing that are visible, but only for things invisible; for visible things last only for a time, and invisible things are eternal...” [cf. 2 Co 4:18] - “... if one of you misbehaves, the more spiritual of you who set him right should do so in spirit of gentleness, not forgetting that you may be tempted yourselves...” [cf. Ga 6:1].

To conclude: Paul continues to emphasize a humble attitude. The faithful ought not to insist excessively on their own rights, or to seek their own advantage - those which, in truth, they could exercise for their own personal benefit. In all, they need to be inspired by the humble attitude of Jesus Christ. The proper attitude is “Fraternal Humility”: “each one should consider the other person better than one self”. The well-being of others is the challenge for community.

Conclusion:

“United Convictions and Love, Common Purpose and Mind”

[1] Ph 2:1-4 seems to constitute a kind of literary unit - that is technically all one extended sentence. The “occasion” to which Paul responds in this letter is the danger to the unity and harmony of the fledgling Church of Philippi. Paul’s response to the threat is that humble outlook, mind-set, attitude of a common purpose, united convictions and mind. There seems to be an interior “dynamic” or development of this one continuous sentence. The concepts noted in this concluding section are what spell out the entire ideal Paul presents: the four realities of the proper Christian existence: life in Christ; the Spirit we have in common; tender sympathy; the persuasion of love. These present the heights of the “theological life”: **flowing from Christ, in the Holy Spirit - leading to a tender sympathy because of the love** among the members of the community.

[2] These four “Christian realities” find their basis in **Christ Jesus, in the Holy Spirit** - this sublime source of it all, renders the attitudes truly “Christian”, “Christ-like.” The Christological Hymn will develop this ideal in an extraordinary manner. The efforts to interpret the “common mind, purpose, or sentiments” need to keep in mind that these are terms full of meaning and possible interpretation. What Paul is urging here is and interior, global attitude of the Christian - one that will determine

the outlook, “mind-set”, ultimate basis of judgment regarding the every day realities of life. This sublime attitude needs to condition each one’s inter-personal relationships in the Christian society.

[3] Paul does offer some details in this “common purpose, attitude, mind”: these recommendations have as their purpose that of safeguarding the unity of the Church of Philippi, which is under a real threat of breaking down:

- the same charity: this needs to be reciprocal, extended to all without exception
- their common vital principle needs to “inspire” the entire community, so that it might live in harmony and unity’
- this is close to the “united heart and soul” of the Acts [cf. Ac 4:32].

[4] The disorders that sorely threaten them are the unruly ambitious seeking of status - the attitude of Christ Jesus would be that of looking toward the benefit of others. Verses 1-4 are leading to the very important “bridge-verse” 5: “... **In your minds**, you must be the same as Christ Jesus.” The key to reading Paul seems to be: that he deduces his “spirituality” from his “dogma” concerning Jesus Christ and His *KENOSIS*. The subsequent Hymn will challenge sublime spirituality in response to the profound dogma concerning Jesus Christ.

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2. The Sacred Heart and the *KENOSIS* of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

[1] As has been noted, Ph 2:1- 4 is already a challenge - with many possible choices in interpretation. Most would agree, however, that Paul is presenting a fervent exhortation concerning the correct fundamental attitude for the Christian. The Philippians - and all of us - need those sentiments, that “mind-set”, that mentality - the “mind of Jesus Christ.” This is a dogmatic reflection with a moral, ethical or spiritual application.

[2] Yet, this is not some kind of an imperative that would come from involved logical reasoning - nor, is it a suggestion on how to get over some passing difficulty in their community life. What Paul seems to be after here is to spell out in some manner that fundamental attitude that should be inherent in the very existence of Christians. The supreme rule for all holiness, its manner and its pressing obligation have their ultimate explanation **in Christ Jesus**. Christian morality and spirituality come to simply being in communion with the Risen Lord and His basic, “constitutional” attitude. All are called to live the life that is in Christ Jesus [cf. Ga

2:20] - no longer to live for one's own ends and purposes. In living the very life of Jesus Christ, one has to work "to put on His mind".

[3] Through the centuries, there have been groups that have risen that would strive to imitate Christ almost literally - and even in some instances, "slavishly" - [as, for example, should there have been a group such as "Jordanists", requiring baptism in the Jordan for the validity of their ritual]. The life of Christ cannot be repeated in all its particulars. What is needed for the Baptized and the Confirmed, in all walks of the Christian life, is "to put on the mind of Jesus Christ". This will be developed now in the challenging Hymn to the Self-Emptying of Christ. In some way, each one imitates the *KENOSIS* of Christ Jesus, the deepest attitude of Jesus Himself. When one has the proper "attitude", the individual actions flow as a proper result: *actiones sunt suppositorum!*

[4] There are many individual texts that present Christ as the Paradigm, and encourage the Imitation/following of Christ - and these usually zero in on a specific point: His humble interior attitude: some modern scholars call this "**His Constitutional FILIATION**": "... The Three Persons are one God, and not three gods, because the three have one substance, one essence, one nature, one divinity, one immensity, one eternity, where no opposition of relationship occurs." [cf. Council of Florence, D-S 1330 - or D 703]

[5] The following are a few examples: "...Christ did not think of himself ... it can only be for God's glory, then, for you to treat each other in the same friendly way that Christ treated you..." [cf. Rm 15:3, 7] - "... Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich but he made himself poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty. As I say, I am only making a suggestion..." [cf. 2 Co 8:9] - "...follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God ... Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her ... This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.." [cf. Ep 5:25-32] - "... Bear with one another, forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love..." [cf. Col 3:13, f.] - "...Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which was still in the future, he endured the cross, disregarding the shamefulness of it..." [cf. Heb 12:2, f.] - "... This in fact is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way he took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in his righteous judge. He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed. You had gone

astray like sheep... - "... And if it is the will of God that you should suffer, it is better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong. Why, Christ Himself, innocent though he was, had died once for sins to lead us to God..." [cf. 1 P 3:17, f.]

[6] The emphasis throughout is always placed on such Christian ideals as poverty, the reason behind suffering, humility and self-surrender. These are key aspects of that **interior attitude**, that **Constitutional Filiation** of Jesus Christ, that are presented over and over again to the early communities and to each believer to be faithfully lived in one's own life.

[7] It is not so much an imitation of this, or that phrase of Jesus Himself - but, what is **the most characteristic of Him**, in so far as this can be penetrated by the minds and hearts of the early Church and its writers. As has been noted, **the key Sapiential Principle of Mt [cf. 11:28, ff.]** could never be insisted on sufficiently: "... Come to me all who labor and are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, **for I am gentle and humble in heart**. and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light..." For the reading of this, we are helped by Ulrich LUTZ [NT *Theology. The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*. Cambridge University Press 1993, pp. 79, f.]:

[a] One might say that, for Mt, **itinerant radicalism** tests the mettle of discipleship. All his readers are, potentially, itinerant radicals. The commission of the itinerant radicals is none other than the commission of the Church altogether. The emphasis on migrancy well accords with Mt's understanding of **the Christian "way", or "path"** of righteousness. Perhaps he viewed the **missionaries**, who remain constantly on the move, with neither goods nor protection, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, as persons who more closely approached the ideal of Christian perfection. With the Mission Discourse, rather than having them stand out from the Church, he places them firmly in the center.

[b] Most striking of all is that Mt, in his **Missionary Discourse**, practically never mentions the substance of what Jesus' disciples are to preach - but almost exclusively their behavior and destiny. When he speaks of **discipleship** [i.e., of the Church], he speaks not only of the behavior of the disciples - their homelessness, their poverty [cf. 10:9, f.] and defencelessness [cf. 10:16]. Above all, he speaks of their destiny: persecution [cf. 10:23] - their being handed over to tribunals [cf. 10:17, f.] - family breakdowns and self-preservation [10:29-31] - **taking up the Cross** [cf. 10:38] - and of death [cf. 10:39].

[c] Directly, or indirectly he **gives their experiences a Christological interpretation**: their homelessness and poverty is the homelessness and poverty of the follower of Jesus, and hence, that of the Son of Man [cf. 8:19, f.]. Their defencelessness is none other than that which Jesus commanded in the Sermon on

the Mount [cf. 5: 39-42] - and which will distinguish **His own behavior** in the Passion. The first to be handed over to men was the Son of Man Himself [cf. 17:22; 20:18; 26:2, 24, f., 45]. Jesus Himself has preceded His followers on the path to the Cross and in the sacrifice of His own life.

[d] In other words, the reason why Mt finds it so important to speak of the behavior and the destiny of the disciples is that they are **images of Jesus Himself**. Discipleship means conforming to the life of Jesus Christ and emulating the model. Mt has Jesus formulate this in the following expression: a pupil does not rank above his teacher, or a servant above his master. The pupil should be **content to share his teacher's lot, the servant to share his master's**. If the master has been called Beelzebub, how much more his household? [cf. 10:24, f.] These words are located squarely in the middle of the Mission Discourse, dividing it into two parts. They form the midpoint not only of its text, but of its substance.

[e] The defining property for the authentic Christian - certainly not for one who is "Christian" in name only - is not words, but deeds. The Judge of the world will pass judgment on their 'fruit' - i.e., **on their works**. The defining property for the Church is beyond the confessions of faith and its institutional fabric - true faith is beyond the formulations and is radicated above in the Divine Reality, and the Ecclesial Institution was established by Christ to lead to union with Him in Charity. The **heart of the message is conformity to Christ**. To be "Church" - "Community" means to accept the Commission from Jesus Christ, to share in His authority: **to live as He did, to suffer as He did**. To be a Church, Community - will always mean Faithful Service, Discipleship. To be Missionaries means itinerancy, movement, commitment, suffering. Mt implies that no single community meets the defining qualities of being a Church - each is called to contribute to the main body, by providing **Missionaries after the Sacred Heart of Jesus**. While the Church needs to proclaim the sublime doctrine transmitted to her, **the heart of the Church** is in its practice, its destiny, its holiness. There will always be suffering in conformity with its prime Paradigm, Model, Jesus Christ in His Sacred Heart.

[8] In order to "**put on the mind of Christ Jesus**", it is necessary to ponder this challenge of His: "... a disciple is not above the teacher, nor is a servant above the master. It is enough for the disciple to **be like the teacher and the servant like the master**. If they called the master of the house 'Beelzebul', how much more will they malign the members of his household..." [cf. Mt 10:24,] [NB: for these comments, cf. Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary 33 A - Mt 1-13*. Dallas TX: Word 1993, pp. 281, f.]

[a] The discussion following the Missionary Discourse is to relate the suffering and rejection to be experienced by the disciples to that which has begun already but which will increase dramatically and be **experienced even by Jesus**

Himself. If He is to be treated harshly and then rejected, so too must His Missionaries expect the same. This emphasis will become sharper as the Gospel proceeds - coming to a head in the Passion Predictions [cf. 16:24, f.].

[b] There is no parallel in Mk to this passage - the fact that “the disciple is not above the teacher” can be found in Lk [cf. 6:40] but not in a context referring to suffering and rejection. Whatever has been experienced by the Master, the “Teacher”, will also be known by His pupils, servants.

[c] Jn has something like this expression: “... remember the words I said to you: a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you, too...” [cf. 15:20]. And as He washed their feet, He proclaimed: “... I tell you most solemnly: no servant is greater than his master...” [cf. Jn 13:16]. These formulations almost seemed to have been designed for “quick recall”, or perhaps for memorization.

[d] “Servant” and “Master” - “Pupil” and “Teacher” are different words for the same relationship - this may even reflect an ancient Jewish proverb, which has otherwise been lost to us. The disciples and the servants of the messianic king are meant to give their lives to the new reign- and Jesus is trying to prepare them for what is coming. Like the Transfiguration is most likely “more for the disciples’ sake” than for the Master’s, the Lord needs to prepare His “own.” The intimate relationship established between Jesus and His disciples is so close that they will share His destiny, His Paschal Mystery.

[e] Teacher/Disciple - Master/Servant: stand together in their respective responsibility and fidelity. Anyone chosen by the Lord will experience His fidelity: “... Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the one who made the promise is faithful. Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works...” [cf. Heb 10:23, f.]. Jesus appeals that in our work, in our teaching, we make use of the same “mind” that characterized His own ministry. This is the challenge of sharing, teaching, the Good News of the Kingdom that will come, the Divine Will to be accomplished; the Divine Name to be hallowed.

[f] With discipleship, service to Jesus and the life-long witness to His Word bring with it inevitable rejection, suffering. The “content” of the Gospel with its Peace, Joy, is in such sharp contrast with the way that it is generally met. The genuine Christian “consolation” can only be in the fact that Jesus has gone on ahead of us - He has preceded us to Calvary, but also to the resurrection. The “mind” of Jesus has sustained the Church through the centuries in her teaching and witness.

[9] The “Following” [*seuela*] of Christ can only be understood from the point of view of the Spirituality of Imitation. It might be noted that Mt’s presentation of the earthly Jesus is more in a general sense - Jesus is simply the Paradigm for the

Christian Way. The NT Letters might be more particular - trying to zero in on **some central aspect - what is central to Jesus** - what would establish His **“Constitutional Filiation.”** The KENOSIS Hymn has been adapted by Paul [perhaps from the Baptismal/ Eucharistic Liturgy] and is made use of here as the challenge to concentration on **Jesus’ Personal “lowliness”**. Whatever it is that is the most “central” to Jesus - what it is that “constitutes” Him - can be symbolized by His **Sacred Heart** - and is presented by Paul as the inspiration of the deepest interior attitude of His followers.

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a. The “Subject” of this Hymn: Jesus Himself

Almost from the earliest times in the Church, there have been two currents of thought for the interpretation of this Hymn - based on the simple fact that in our Faith, Jesus may be looked upon in several ways:

- in His Divinity - Personality and Nature - from all Eternity;
- in His Humanity, hypostatically united in time to His Divine Nature.

Which ever of these two is chosen, we must also remember: “...Jesus Christ is **the ICON of the unseen God...**” [cf. Col 1:15] - “... Philip said: ‘Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied.’ Have I been with you all this time, Philip’, Jesus said to him, ‘and you still do not know me? **to have seen me, is to have seen the Father...**” [cf. Jn 14: 8, ff.]. - “... **Jesus is the radiant light of God’s glory and the perfect copy of His nature...**” [cf. Heb 1: 3]. The Nativity - Gethsemane - Calvary: all are “windows into the Trinity and mirrors for Christianity”. Jesus is the Incarnate exegesis of the Mystery of God and His Plan. In Jesus, the humanity and divinity cannot be separated: the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in His human nature endured all these realities.

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b. The Pre-Existent Christ: before His Incarnation through Mary

1. Most of the Latin Fathers understood the Hymn in this sense - a view that has dominated until our present time. There was a wide-spread conviction that this Hymn had in mind the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Some biblical scholars use this verse to prove the “pre-existence” of Christ as enunciated in the Prologue of Jn’s Gospel - already “in the Beginning” WAS the Word and the Word was God [cf. Jn 1:1,ff.]. However, since Paul preceded John, Ph would provide the earliest “proof-text” in this school that Jesus was from all eternity.

2. This interpretation presents the Hymn as a view into **the very heart of the Trinity** - this would establish the “essence” of Christianity - if Jesus is not **the natural**

Son of God, and has not risen, then all our preaching is in vain: "... if Christ has not been raised then all our preaching is useless and your believing is useless; indeed we are shown up as witnesses who have committed perjury before God because we swore in evidence before God that he raised Jesus to life..." [cf. 1 Co 15: 14, ff.] . This first understanding of the Hymn would mean that Paul had in mind that Divine Son of God, prior to His Incarnation. This would present us with the real challenge that the *KENOSIS* would indicate an intra-Trinitarian aspect of the Mystery.

3. "To be in the Form of God" seems to almost an "ontological description of Jesus' divine nature" - many would see this word in other seemingly equivalent words used for this. Often to avoid dogmatic pitfalls, other terms used would be: "condition" - "state" - "aspect". Whatever the term used, this is how this interpretation reads this passage - there is presented here by Paul for these scholars, the "Pre-existing Christ."

4. The Hymn then would present a two-fold KENOSIS: simply, the Redemptive **Incarnation**:

- He **did not cling** to His equality with God;

- but, positively, "**emptied Himself**"

- first, by accepting the Incarnation;

- secondly, literally emptying His human nature, by His Redemptive Death on the Cross - and His Resurrection.

c. **The Incarnate Christ: in His Earthly existence**

1. The Greek Fathers - and also the Latin Fathers before St. Ambrose [who was much harried by the Arian heresy] - as well as increasing numbers of scholars today see this entire context one of **Fraternal Humility** - getting along by imitating the humility of Jesus Christ. For all these interpreters the subject of this entire context is Jesus Christ, Incarnate in His concrete human-divine situation - that is, the "historical" Christ. The pronouns "He emptied Himself" would seem to refer - according to many scholars - to **Christ in this world**.

2. The "**Form of God**" does indeed indicate the divinity - but its having assumed the human nature of Jesus. There are also enormous problems for philosophers if they take this as an "ontological discourse" - this would mean that Jesus surrendered the divine "substance, or essence". Rather, the word "Form" of God is that which would appear in certain earthly manifestations of Jesus - as the Glory of His Transfiguration. Jesus would have surrendered the visible manifestations of the Divinity - so, the expression would not pertain to abstract philosophy. The paradox is that Jesus assumed "the form of a servant" - and this could be taken literally even in

a philosophical sense: indeed Jesus did assume a human nature. Jesus “hid” his full and complete participation in the Father’s divinity - in fact, He is often referred to as “the Man” - there is a “man” out there who told me everything I did - says the woman of Samaria [cf. Jn 4] - Pilate brings Jesus out after the scourging with the announcement: Behold, the Man! - and Peter in his denials said that he did not know “the Man!”

3. In this sense, “Jesus did not cling to His equality with God” does not so much refer to some philosophical speculation on Jesus’ divine nature - but refers more to the treatment He would receive from others, as a consequence to His freely chosen way of self-emptying. Many of the translators, to avoid dogmatic problems, translate this phrase as: He did not cling to the “state” of equality with God - to by-pass entirely the entire thorny question in this mystery of the divinity of Jesus Christ. His “equality with God” corresponds to His “divine condition” - contrasted paradoxically with His corresponding earthly condition of a slave. He surrendered His “form of God” - to be understood in this sense as His condition of personal authority, power, prestige, rank of respect.

4. The “content” of the KENOSIS [i.e., of **what** did Jesus empty Himself?] - would be something that would be manifest through His human nature - something that would have been noticeable, such as His “external glory.” These verses, then, describe Jesus’ over-all attitude during His entire earthly existence. This says positively what is contained negatively in this enigmatic phrase: He did not cling to His equality with God. Jesus never took advantage of His divine “condition”, “state”, during His earthly sojourn - rather, His was a life-long progressive self-emptying. One and the same KENOSIS is expressed both positively and negatively, in a sense of emphasis, completeness. In this extraordinary passage Paul has been able to contemplate that most interior attitude of Jesus Christ - put in the sense that He never took advantage of those rights proceeding from His proper “state” as the Son of God.

5. The great paradox is that the Son of God has assumed “the form, condition, state, appearance of a slave.” This is the content of His self-emptying: far from taking a human “condition” that might have been more in accord with His august sublime nature [as He did briefly perhaps in the Transfiguration] - this would not have “hidden” sufficiently His divine “condition” - as the Apostles indeed hid their faces in fear: no one can look upon God and live! [Moses covered his face, afraid to look on God - cf. Ex 3:6]. Throughout the entire period of His earthly sojourn, Jesus renounced the condition that was rightly His, to appear “in the form of God”: in a condition of authority, prestige, rank - He came across as a man, a slave.

a. The passage would mean in this interpretation that Jesus Christ, on earth - even though He subsists in the form of God, did not wish to take advantage

of this privileged “condition” of being equal to God- but He emptied Himself and assumed the condition of a slave. He was so similar to the “Poor Man” that there was no distinguishing Him as anyone “special”; He humbled Himself to the extraordinary extent of allow Himself to be “handed over” to His death on the Cross.

b. Some scholars try to take a “median” position between these first two interpretations: this view maintains that the idea of pre-existence is always in the background. There may be something of a parallel in the modern reading of the Sacraments. St. Thomas emphasized greatly the **Hypostatic Union** as the real nature of the Sacraments - a union of the divine with the created element - while modern scholars emphasize more the **Paschal Mystery**. However, in this latter, the Paschal Mystery assumes its efficacy because there is always the Hypostatic Union - in that it is indeed the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity Who died on the Cross in His human nature. Similarly here - in the end - Paul was convinced that Jesus is indeed True God and True Man.

c. There is, of course, hovering around this entire debate - enormous theological questions - which most biblical scholars try to keep extraneous to the strictly exegetical questions that arise here. It is very difficult not to bring in much later Christological discussions into the interpretation of this passage - written long generations before some of the subsequent debates.

d. A further possibility is that all that was said and done by Jesus reveals His Father [the most Blessed Trinity] and His Plan of our Redemption. Therefore, there is also the possibility that we can approach this extraordinary Hymn from the perspective that Christ’s life-long self-emptying gives us some revelation, understanding of His **Constitutional Filiation** made known to us also in the **Sacred Heart**.

A Synthesis of the Two Positions:

1. In all biblical interpretation, there is the concerted effort to determine the meaning of the texts from its own expressions, context, over-all teaching of a given author under divine inspiration. The challenge of the scholar is “ex-egesis”, and the scientific avoidance of all “eis-egesis”. The science of hermeneutics has known some development in our own time. The challenge is present for the theological student not to read doctrine “into” the sacred text - but, to be led by the teaching of the Church for a better understanding of God’s word for the mysteries of the faith.

2. There are many interpreters who have concluded that there is nothing in Ph 2 that would any longer defend the reading of the “subject” of the Hymn to be the Pre-existent Christ: most readers today would understand “He emptied Himself” to be a total humility, “lowliness” in the life of Jesus, throughout His earthly sojourn.

There are many indications that Paul was challenging the Philippians - and the Church of all time - to a common attitude, mentality, with Christ Jesus.

3. Having said this, it also is challenging to read the entire earthly sojourn of Jesus as being employed to communicate, share, to reveal the God Who sent Him - the Heavenly Father, Son and Holy Spirit - as well as His Divine Plan of Redemptive Incarnation - for the Glory of God. Whoever sees Me, He tells us, sees the Father - sees the Trinity. This consistent “lowly state” of the earthly Jesus tells us something about the inner Trinitarian life and the Divine Plan for every human being to share that life forever. As the Sacred Heart is the “Symbol” of Divine Love - the Cross reveals to us the evil of human sin, and the infinity of God’s mercy.

4. The Philippians were - and we are presently - being challenged to imitate the “**constitutional filiation**” of Jesus Christ - in His total acceptance of the Word of God. The Christian attitude is well presented for us by Vatican II: “... The ‘obedience of faith’ [Rm 16:26; cf. Rm 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6] must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man **freely commits his entire self to God**, making ‘the **full submission** of his intellect and will to God who reveals’, willingly assenting to the Revelation given by him. Before his faith can be exercised, man must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and ‘makes it easy for all to **accept and believe the truth**’. The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that revelation may be more and more profoundly understood...” [cf. DV 5].

d. Jesus Reveals His Own Divine “Disinterest”, Life-long Self-Emptying, Giving

1. This text of St. Paul to the Philippians is certainly one of the “classical texts” for NT Christology. Many would see this as the prime revelation that Jesus makes of the Trinity and the divine plan self-emptying out of love “explains” the Trinity as well as the terms of the Mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation - and the Holy Spirit sent to us as “Gift.” This theme has more and more been developed in our own time enabling us to speak of a “Trinitarian, Mariological, Ecclesial and Anthropological *KENOSIS*” - this term would express also the very Image of God implanted, breathed into us in the act of Creation, “made to the Image and Likeness of God.” In creation, through divine revelation, believers are gifted with a better appreciation of the Kenotic Attitude” of the Trinity.

2. It would be helpful once again to reflect on the Council’s presentation of the “Christological Dimension” of Divine Revelation: “...After God had spoken many times and in various ways through the prophets, ‘in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son’ [Heb 1:1, f.]. For he sent his Son, the eternal Word who enlightens all men, to dwell among men and **to tell them about the inner life of God**. Hence,

Jesus Christ, sent as a ‘man among men’, speaks the words of God [Jn 3:34], and **accomplishes the saving work** which the Father gave him to do [Jn 5:36; 17:4]. As result he himself - to see whom is to see the Father [cf. Jn. 14:9] - completed and perfected revelation and confirmed it with divine guarantees. He did this **by the total fact of His presence and self-manifestation - by words and deeds, signs and miracles, but above all by his death and glorious resurrection** from the dead, and **finally by the sending of the Spirit of Truth**. He revealed that God was with us, to deliver us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to eternal life...” [cf. DV 4].

3. The traditional interpretation of the KENOSIS of Jesus Christ consists substantially in the affirmation that the taking on of the form of a slave, the emptying of Himself - refers directly to the fact of the Redemptive Incarnation - and precisely, to that instant of Jesus’ becoming Man. The terms of this Mystery refer to an act of the free will of Jesus in His pre-existent “condition”, “state”. In this, He refuses to be jealously attached to His divine “rights”, external manifestation of His divine Glory. This divine decision, from all eternity, “reflects” makes known through His becoming Man, this eternal decree of the Divine Will, as well as something about the Eternal Nature of the Most Blessed Trinity: an eternal goodness, wisdom, diffusive of itself. By becoming Man, Jesus “emptied Himself” - and within the Trinity, Jesus carries out the Divine Word, Will - His food is to do the Father’s will. This is what “constitutes” Him - in eternity.

4. The KENOSIS, then, is the very act of the Redemptive Incarnation with all the consequences of the human existence that the Eternal Word has freely assumed in time, by renouncing His equality with God - in so far as the external manifestation of His glory is concerned. Furthermore, from the point of Divine Revelation – the KENOSIS reveals to the ages the Intra-Trinitarian “situation”, “condition”, reality of the IInd Person of the Most Blessed Trinity: He has come solely for the Father’s Glory, not to do His own Will, but the Father’s. This constant “deference” to the Father is then continued in the Holy Spirit, Who only comes to “remind” the Church, as a “**Doctor Ecclesia**”, of all that Jesus has said and done. [cf. Jn14:26; I Jn 5:6].

5. The KENOSIS is complete: the Pre-existent Word “emptied Himself” by becoming a Slave - and the perfect Human Nature of Jesus literally was “emptied” in His bleeding to death on the Cross. This has offered an excellent doctrinal synthesis regarding the pre-existing Divine person and nature, with the assuming in time of His human nature, united hypostatically in the Divine Person. This called a “Kenotic Theory of the Incarnation”.

a.] Throughout History, we find the presentations of Paul and John, along with the great metaphysical descriptions presented by the Councils and defended and intensified in the Middle Ages. The Lord Jesus did not set aside any of His

“essential attributes” of His Divinity, such as His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence - He remained hypostatically united to the Trinity even in the awful moment of the Divine “Abandonment” on the Cross: “My God, My God, why have You abandoned ME” [cf. Ps 22]. The Catholic Church has never believed that the KENOSIS would mean the absolute self-emptying to include the Divinity itself - this would be a real “emptying” of the dogma of the Redemptive Incarnation: one of the Trinity died on the Cross in His human nature.

b.] St. Thomas teaches [Part III, q. 50, a. 3, *Sed Contra*]: Although Christ died as man, and His holy soul was separated from His sinless body, nevertheless **His Godhead remained unseparated from both** - from the soul, I mean, and from the body.... in death, though severed from one another, both body and soul continued to have the one same hypothesis of the Word. This one hypostasis of the Word was the hypostasis of the soul and of the body. For neither soul nor body ever had an hypostasis of its own, besides the hypostasis of the Word: for there was always the one hypostasis of the Word, and never two.

6. Christ’s Kenosis prepared for by earlier Biblical Paradigms: a careful contemplation of the OT offers some very promising “leads” concerning the sublime spiritual preparation for this extraordinary Mystery: at least three come immediately to mind: the Suffering Servant - the Innocent Sufferer - and the ANAWIM:

a.] The Suffering Servant of Yahweh of II - Is: [cf. Is 42; 49; 50: 52 13-53:12]: many scholars see the Four Canticles of the Suffering Servant to be one of the biblical prophecies also of this aspect of the mystery of Jesus Christ. What is common between these two passages [Ph 2:5-11 and especially Is 52:13 - 53: 12] is the general outline of the abyssal lowering of the servant and his eventual exaltation, vindication. Many scholars see the preparation for the KENOSIS of Jesus Christ to be looked for in this remarkable OT prophecy. This would simply be the projection of the Servant of Yahweh onto the Person of Jesus Christ - His KENOSIS/**SERVICE** in the last analysis was that He came to SERVE and not to be SERVED, to **give His life in atonement, ransom** for others. Not everyone holds this view - but, there are many who do maintain even a linguistic tie - not to speak of a very strong thematic tie. One of the “Christologies” is indeed a “Servant Christology” - perhaps only superseded by the “Son of Man:” theme.

b.] The Innocent Sufferer: once again, we have the abasement/exaltation theme. The Innocent Just Person is called by vocation to pass through endless humiliations, sufferings, and persecutions - allowed by God in order that this one be exalted. This is a theme that often sees the light of day throughout the OT: “...ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried ... he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins.... through his wounds, we are healed...” [cf. Is 53: 4, ff.] - “...As for the virtuous man who is poor, let us oppress him he opposes our

way of life ... He claims to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a son of God..." [cf. Ws 2:10, ff.] - "...coming to perfection in a short time, he achieved a long life; his soul being pleasing to God ..." [cf. Ws 4:14] - "... My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? ... Yet, here I am, more worm than man, scorn of mankind, jest of the people ... The Lord has not disdained the poor man in his poverty..." [cf. Ps 22] - "...the Lord accords his favor to the humble..." [cf. Pr 3:34'] - "... the Lord saves the man of downcast eyes..." [cf. Jb 22:29]. The fulfillment of these is accorded to Jesus Christ, so remembered throughout the NT [cf. Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11; 18:14; 1 P 5:5].

What seems to link these verses together is the recurring theme of abasement and subsequent exaltation - and many see in this recurring theme over the OT centuries, in varying bodies of writings [as prophecies, wisdom writings, and psalms] the best preparation for Ph 2. The *KENOSIS* does indeed describe the abasement of Jesus and His eventual exaltation. He is the just Servant, par excellence, Who assumes the depths of "abasement" only, in the end, to be given a name beyond every name. He submitted Himself voluntarily to suffering so that we might have eternal joy. **Acceptance in suffering** is always the OT characteristic note of the Just Person - this is the "quintessence" of OT piety and religion. Jesus' own Self-Emptying did indeed assume the form of a Servant, to die on the Cross.

God does resist the proud and to the lowly, He communicates His grace [cf. Pr 3:34]. This ancient theme is very close to Ph 2: the situation of Jesus Christ realizes this ancient dictum in a way that never could have been imagined - Jesus is the Just Son of God, abased and exalted - remaining always in the "condition" of God He assumed in time the situation of a slave - and was unjustly put to death, in the most horrible of forms known to the society of that time. In this sense, the *KENOSIS* consists in Christ's abasement in the Redemptive Incarnation - He assumed the condition of a slave - and "emptied Himself as man" by bleeding to a physical death as a sacrificial libation

Jesus exercised a free act of His will in the voluntary abasement that He received in His human condition. This Innocent, Just Son of God suffered for His loyalty, fidelity to His Father - this is the most sublime realization of an ancient biblical typology - which, perhaps, began with Abraham who is the father of all believers : "... Though it seemed that Abraham's Hope could not be fulfilled he hoped and he believed, and by so doing he did become the father of many nations exactly as he had been promised..." [cf. Rm 4:18]. Beyond "obedience", is the Savior's love for His Father's Will.

c.] The ANAWIM - Biblical Poverty: some see "Poverty" as a kind of Constitutional Metaphor: the "Poor" person becomes totally dependent on the Mercy of God, in an attitude of hope-filled faith, leading to love for his/her neighbor. There is an example in these texts, involving women: "... El Shaddai has married me

[Naomi] bitterly. Filled full, I departed - Yahweh brings me back empty. Why call me Naomi, then, since Yahweh has given witness against me and Shaddai has afflicted me..." [cf. Rt 1:29.f.] - "... the Lord has looked upon his lowly handmaid..." [cf. Lk 1:53]. In this view, the *KENOSIS* is the voluntary self-poverty of Jesus Christ - in the sense of abject humiliations, willingly renouncing His "riches" due to His divinity that would have been evident in the human nature of Jesus. The *KNOSIS* is the sum total of all the humiliations suffered by Jesus Christ - the primary renunciation is the surrender of that "wealth" that would have permeated His hypostatically united human nature to His divine Person. This is the Constitutional Poverty of Jesus Christ. [NB: for pages 41-63, cf. Josef HERIBAN. *Retto PHRONEIN e KENOSIS. Studio esegetico su Fil 2:1-5, 6-11.* ROMA: LAS 1983, passim].

SUMMARY

Believers then, are called to "imitate"/"follow"/"put on the Mind of" Jesus Christ: there is a Trinitarian dimension to the *KENOSIS* of Jesus Christ as has been noted, and human beings are made to this image and likeness of God. Within Jesus' innermost being, there is an act of 'self-emptying' - at the inmost center of His powers. The *KENOSIS* also reveals to us the dimension of the three Divine Persons, Their relations, Their Missions. The emphasis is that being in the "Form of God" - and within God Himself, there is some analogical form of the *KENOSIS*.

God is not "absolute omnipotence" - but, "**God is love**" [cf. I Hn 4:8, 16. The Father's *KENOSIS* is that He "hands over", "gives up" His ONLY, Son, - His Most Beloved [cf. Rm 4:25; 8:32; Jn 3:16]. The Holy Spirit comes as GIFT: God gives the Spirit without reserve [cf. Jn 3:34]. God is Tri-personal Self-giving. In the Redemptive Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Most Blessed Trinity - the Divine Glory shows the extent of Divine Love for humanity. This mystery has unveiled what is most deeply His own Truth: **Self-giving**.

The Eucharist becomes for the Church a continuation of this Memorial of Trinitarian Love, really and substantially present to the Church as Bread that is broken, Wine that is poured out - in the Self-giving of Holy Communion, humanity is challenged to make a response in kind: **self-giving love**. The Lamb immolated before the constitution of the world is an image of the Eternal, Self-Giving of the three Divine Persons.

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3. The Sacred Heart: Contemplating the “Pierced One”

“... But over the House of David and the citizens of Jerusalem I will pour out a spirit of kindness and prayer. They will **look on the One they have pierced**, and they will mourn for him as for an only son, and weep for Him as people weep for a first-born child...When that day comes, **a fountain** will be opened for the House of David and for the citizens of Jerusalem, for sin and impurity...” [cf. Zc 12:10; 13:1].

“... not one of his bones will be broken, they will look on the one whom they have pierced...” [cf. Jn 19:36]

“... It is He Who is coming on the clouds; **everyone will see Him even those who pierced Him**, and all the races of the earth will mourn over Him. This is the Truth. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord God, who is, who was, and who is to come...” [cf. Rv 1: 7, ff.]

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Various Biblical Approaches to this Mystery [cf. Édouard GLOTIN, SJ, *Le Coeur de Jésus. Approches Anciennes et Nouvelles*. Collection: Vie consacrée. Brussels 1997 pp. 9 -29, passim]

Presentation

[1] The Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas* [May 15, 1956] had among its intentions that of making more explicit the biblical background of the Sacred Heart. However, in those days, the science of exegesis was still developing - as hopefully, it will until the end of time. As a result, the Encyclical presented no pretensions of being exhaustive. One surprising omission is the text pondered above: **Learn from Me, because I am meek and humble of heart...** [cf. Mt 11:29]. The task of all serious students of the Word of God will always be: Contemplation, Study, Personal Experience and heeding the Magisterium [cf. DV 8]. This plan can be applied to this manifestation of Trinitarian Love.

[2] In the generations that have passed since the Encyclical, the IInd Vatican Council has intervened and challenged a committed biblical and theological - contemplation and study. There is still needed a kind of “over-view” of this infinite Divine Mystery, whose depths can never be totally fathomed, and never comprehended. There are different approaches to this central point of Divine Revelation. The following might be considered:

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1.] Dogmatic Contemplation: this was the immediate response to the Papal Letter. This is also an emphasis within the document. Borrowing a symbol from anthropology, the Heart is almost a natural symbol to express human love - when a

Heart is united to a Divine Person, then the Sacred Heart is indeed a privileged manifestation of the Love of God, within the Trinity - as well as its manner of being poured out as re-creative, redemptive, and sanctifying. The theologians would tell us that a symbol is made up of “sign” and its “meaning.” These need to be pondered.

a. Pope John Paul II has offered a sublime development with his Encyclical Letter, *Dives in Misericordia* [Nov. 30, 1980]: “... It is precisely because sin exists in the world which ‘God so loved... that he gave his only Son’, that God, who is love, cannot reveal Himself otherwise than as mercy. This corresponds not only to the most profound truth of that love which God is, but also to the whole interior truth of man and of the world which is man’s temporary homeland. Mercy in itself, as a perfection of the infinite God, is also infinite. Also infinite, therefore, and inexhaustible, is the Father’s readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to His home. **Infinite are the readiness and power of forgiveness** which flow continually from the marvelous value of the sacrifice of His Son. No human sin can prevail against this power or even limit it. ... Authentic knowledge of the God of Mercy, the God of tender love, is constant and inexhaustible source of conversion, not only as a momentary interior act, but also as a permanent attitude, as state of mind...” [DM 13].

b. The mystery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus reveals the Merciful Love of the entire Trinity. This love “peaked” in the Paschal Mystery - immortalized in the Eucharist, represented also in some way, by the Sacred Heart. The Sacred Heart, whose beating was tragically interrupted at physical death, remains eternally united to the Divinity, living in the Resurrection, lasting indefectibly through eternity outpouring merciful love toward humanity. Merciful Love became Incarnate - and sanctifies through the ages, by re-creating a new heaven and a new earth - inspiring the Church at the dawn of the Third Millennium with a New Evangelization.

c. Admitting that the Sacred Books do not make formal mention of this Devotion, nonetheless the reality of Divine Merciful Love seems to pour out from every page:

1.] The Promises of the OT: these are taken up primarily in the Encyclical in numbers 29-39 [cf. the National Catholic Welfare Conference edition]. The OT emphasizes the **Divine Covenant of Merciful Love**, not in abstract concepts, but in a symbolic presentation of family, parental or conjugal love [Dt 32:11] - through the Prophets [cf. Ho 11:3, f.; Is 49: 14,f.] - and in a particular way by the Wisdom Poet of the Songs [cf. Ct 2:2; 6:3; 8:3]. The rich symbolism tied God Himself very forcefully - of His own free divine initiative - to His wayward people From the beginning, Divine Love manifests itself dynamically in Creation, salvation, sanctification - constantly offering His Covenant of Mercy.

2.] The Logic of the NT: [cf. the English translation, NCWC translation, ## 40 - 49] - the NT texts are interpreted in the light of the Magisterium through the Councils, the Fathers of the Church and the great Doctors of the Middle Ages. The emphasis is on the corporal reality of the humanity of Jesus Christ, the affectivity of the Incarnate Word of God. The Heart of the Redeemer appears as the center of the universe. Jesus Christ has loved with a human heart, and in some way is united to every single human being. [cf. GS 22].

3.] Analysis of the Gospel Accounts: the abundant treasures of His grace are hidden in the sanctuary of the Sacred Heart, where they are made known to the Church. With the help of the great contemplatives of the Fathers of the Church and the Doctors of the Middle Ages, the interior depth of divine love became more and more understood. The contemplative, studious experience of these great saints provide for the Church a kind of "film", an unfolding account in ever greater depth of the mysteries of the Life of Jesus in general, with the Paschal Mystery tantamount throughout.

4.] Recapitulation in the Paschal Mystery: the "Pierced One" serves as the ICON of the Paschal Mystery. This pierced Sacred Heart of the Lord holds deep within the treasures of the sacramental life of the Church - which was **born from the open side of Jesus**: "... For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth 'the wondrous sacrament of the whole church.'" [cf. SC 5] - "...The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus [cf. Jn 19:34], and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to his death on the cross: 'And if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all to myself [cf. Jn 12:32]. ..' [cf. LG 3].

The birth of the much beloved Spouse - "the delight of His eyes" [cf. Ezk] springs forth as the Mother of many children through time. After the Ascension, she receives from the loving Heart of Jesus, the Holy Spirit sent in abundance on Pentecost. This becomes the source of the infusion of charity all through the long centuries, of inexhaustible wealth of holiness from this divine treasury. The adoration of the Priestly Heart of Jesus inspires the Church to this day. The ICON of the Merciful High Priest in eternal Prayer of praise, and Thanksgiving, and Adoration, puts His Word on the prayers of the centuries, re-capitulated "through Christ Our Lord!"

2.] **Philological Contemplation**: this would be to trace "Heart" through the Scriptures [cf. *Biblical Spiritualities of the Heart*. ed. by Annice Callahn, RCSH. NY: Paulist 1990]. The heart has served through the ages as the natural symbol of love, prescinding from the natural differences of cultures. This symbolism seems almost inscribed in human nature. In recent years, the difference of cultures has become

better known - and some would reject the “symbolism of the heart” as pertaining to another time. Fr. K. Rahner, SJ proposed that the “heart” is rather the very center of a human being and is the source not only of love, but intelligence, wisdom, creativity, commitment.

a. Pope John Paul noted this in his first Encyclical: “... In its penetrating analysis of ‘the modern world’, the IInd Vatican Council reached that most important point of the visible world that is man, by penetrating like Christ the depth of human consciousness and by making contact with the inward mystery of man, which in biblical and non-biblical language is pressed by the word “**heart**.” Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is the one who penetrated in a unique, unrepeatable way into the mystery of man and **entered his ‘heart.’** Rightly does the IInd Vatican Council teach: ‘The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come [Rm 5:14], Christ the Lord, the New Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.’ And the Council continues: ‘He who is the image of the invisible God [Col 1:15] is Himself the perfect man who has restored the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in Him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by His Incarnation, He, the Son of God, in a certain way united Himself with each man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and **with a human heart He loved**. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been one of us, like to us in all things, except sin [cf. GS 22]. He, the redeemer of man...” [cf. **RH** 8].

b. Perhaps the two most frequently mentioned human organs in the bible would be the “hand” and” heart” - as is evident, the hand being exterior, and the heart deep within. The “hand” carries out whatever the heart has conceived. As we contemplate the pierced hands [and side] of the Risen Lord we are led to the secrets of His Sacred Heart. We are being challenged to be in His school, to learn from Him [cf. Mt 11:29], from His humble heart. ¶Through the Pierced Heart of the Savior of the Word we are brought into the most profound depths of the Mystery of the Trinity.

c. The Psalms are the inspired Book of the Heart - and very often help us to understand more in depth the human Heart of Jesus Christ: “... I had hoped for sympathy, but in vain - no one to console me...” [cf. Ps 69:20, f.] - “... I am like water draining away, my bones are all disjointed, my heart is like wax, melting inside of me; my palate is drier than potsherd and my tongue is stuck to my jaw...” [cf. Ps 22:13, ff.] - “... Yahweh, the king rejoices in your power; what great joy you r saving

help gives him! You have granted him his heart's desire, not denied him what his lips entreated..." [cf. Ps 21:2, f.]. - "... I thank you..." [cf. Ps 9:1, f.].

d. Today the contrast might not be so much "heart-hand" - but "heart-head" - in relationship with God, with others, it can never be reduced to a pragmatic list of needs, wants - but, needs to be expressed in creative love. A truly "balanced" psychology would ask for harmony between head and heart - there is need for harmonious conjugation between head and heart. The broader appreciation of "heart" in today's cultures has led us back to God's Holy Word, where the "heart" was more the center of affective intelligence - of choice - creativity - fecundity - courage - perseverance.

3.] Kerygmatic Contemplation: by this is meant those "summaries" [cf. Ac 2:42-47; 4:32-35], those well thought out resume's of early Christianity - good examples are also those of the preaching of Peter and Paul [cf. Ac 2-13] - as, the encouraging discourses of Barnabbas, the "Son of Encouragement" [cf. Ac 4:36]. These discourses shocked many non-believers into conversion - and gently persuaded many faithful wayfarers into perseverance in hope. The "kerygma" was able to summarize the entire Salvation History into a single dynamic, giving to the whole a vital cohesion.

a. This is an essential biblical approach and brings together the tendency of looking for the very "core" message of any lesson, sermon. It is necessary to find every doctrine in the heart of Christianity - and in this heart, there is always room for all the particular teachings of Jesus Christ. Through the Liturgy, too, there has been a re-discovery of the **Paschal Mystery**. The **Sacred Heart** - almost literally - seems to be discerned within, through the **Mystery of the Pierced One** - inviting contemplation, reflection.

b. The Sacred Heart is applied as a symbol, ICON of the Paschal Mystery - a kind of resume, synthesis, summa. The towering symbol, sign, offered by John is the Pierced One [cf. Jn 20:30] upon whom we are all invited to look, ponder, contemplate. This is the sign of signs in these passages. This is the symbol of soteriology and of history:

1.] **Soteriological Symbol**: the Book of Wisdom comments on Moses' Bronze Serpent in the desert: "... for they had a **saving token** to remind them of the commandments of your Law. **Whoever turned to it was saved**, not by what he looked at, but **by you**, the universal savior..." [cf. Ws 16:6, f.]. And Zechariah spoke of **looking on the Pierced One**, mourned as a first-born son [cf. Zc 12:10] - '...Not one of his bones will be broken, they will **look on the one they have pierced...**' [cf. Jn 19:37]. This is the great "Soteriological Symbol" that calls to mind the "New" Commandment: to love one another **as** the Father has loved Him, and **as** He has loved us. Throughout Jn's gospel, there is a number of other signs, symbols

that need to be contemplated in the Word of God, as the Eternal Son of the Father, and in His Plan of Salvation - these often served as subjects for early Christian art

- the **Temple** that would be destroyed, and then re-built in just three days' time [cf. Jn 2:13-22];
- the **Bread of Life** [cf. Jn 6] - both Eucharistic and sapiential;
- the **Good Shepherd** Who never forgets His "own" [cf. Jn 10];
- the **grain of wheat** that falls into the ground and dies - and this is the only way it can bear fruit [cf. Jn 12:24]
- the **Vine and branches**, trimmed to produce more fruit [cf. Jn 15];
- the **Immolated Lamb** and the New Passover [cf. Jn 19:36].

From earliest times, these images dominated art - there are images of the Good Shepherd from the 2nd half of the 1st century - close to the Sacred Heart devotion, in that it shows Him in the act of handing over His life for His sheep. In today's Liturgy, it is the Good Shepherd of Luke [15:3-7] that dominates "Cycle C" with the Lost Sheep on His shoulders.

2.] **Historical Symbol:** this is the *KAIROS*, *that* central instant of the "Hour" about which Jesus spoke when He would pass from this world to His Father. This is the unique Paschal Sign in history, which summarizes the eternal plan of God, encapsulated in the drama of the Passion and Resurrection. Jn tells us that he was an eye-witness to the event: one of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance, and immediately there flowed forth blood and water [cf. Jn 19:34]. This "witnessed" event makes time stand still - the Piercing is the birth of the Church, as Jesus had already ex-spired. This is not unlike a snap-shot of the instant of high drama: we "see", we "look on the pierced one" through John's eyes. In the piercing there flows the Blood of sacrifice and the Living Water - a further symbol of the coming Spirit, the Lord and Giver of New Life. From this most profound state of death, the Pierced One manifests the signs of a New Life, a New Creation, in the blood and water. Death is transformed by the Pierced One.

c. The tie between the Pierced Side and the Sacred Heart is not immediate - some of the earliest writers refer to the blood and water flowing from the body of Christ - and not specifically from His Heart. Jesus Himself gives some hint of the deep bond between the two in these extremely mysterious words celebrated on the Feast of Tabernacles: "... On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood there and cried out: If any man is thirsty, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me. As scripture says; '**From his breast** shall flow fountains of living water. He was speaking of **the Spirit** which those who

believed in him were to receive for there was no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified..." [cf. Jn 7:37, f.]. There are those who would connect this more specific word to the deepest depths of the Pierced One, namely His "Heart." All through the long ages of the Church, little by little the contemplative Church penetrated this mystery, looking into, through the Pierced Side into the deepest personal center of the Incarnate Word. Contemplative study and experience, with life-long fidelity to the Magisterium, has uncovered the loving design of the Father: the inexhaustible fecundity of the Paschal act is explained by the free decision of the Father's infinite love. He has loved His "own" in the world, **unto the very end**. [cf. Jn 13:1] - and **from the very depths**.

d. Through the long centuries of the Church's contemplation, only very gradually did the bond between the Pierced One and the Sacred Heart come to the fore among preachers and saints. Pius XII noted the symbolism. For centuries, **the Church "looked on" the Pierced One in loving contemplation [cf. Jn 19:37]** - eventually, through saints, the symbolism emerged. This level of studious contemplation and contemplative study does not move one to respond as one would to a dogmatic questionnaire. This is developed much more along the lines of the "Symbolic Logic" of Saints - this is a steady attraction of all the images towards the evangelical representation, those that could in some way contribute to a deeper penetration of this aspect of the Paschal Mystery. Carried along by the living faith of the Church, the contemplation of the Pierced One has seen its horizons broadened, deepened, expanded, intensified almost to the infinite, and the Holy Spirit intervened in ways that could not have been foreseen. From the preaching and teaching of the Church and her special scholars and saints the Sacred Heart devotion eventually emerged as a fruit of the tradition of the Church.

4.] Reflective Contemplation: after the Sacred Heart Devotion had fallen into some disuse, the recent years have seen a dramatic upswing among serious scholars. Fr. Balthasar held that perhaps **Jn 19:31-37** is the prime text on which to base the **Sacred Heart Devotion**. There can be no doubt that the Pierced One, from Whose open side there are actively flowing the streams of salvation in the Blood and Water that came from Him - these are realities that lend themselves so readily to symbolism. All of this is the culmination of the high drama of Jesus' death on the Cross. Nothing in these texts is said explicitly of the human heart of the dead Jesus. Others would want to include the entire life of Jesus, as is currently done in Eucharistic theology. These are some of the directions that have been noted:

a. Gethsemane: and the mysterious appearance of the sweat of blood - some of the saints have been fascinated by this aspect of the mystery of Jesus Christ. As the ex-expression of the Father's will, in the olive grove, the healing, refreshing blood of our redemption is "pressed forth" from deep within Him.

b. His deepest interior sentiments: other interpreters would ponder the deep interior “sadness” of Jesus, His disappointment in His “own” - His going off to lonely places to pray, or up into the hills before dawn. This constant inner bond with His Father is also in some way present in the sacred Heart.

c. The Merciful High Priest: “... You, who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin; then I said, just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book: ‘God, here I am! I am coming to do your will!’ [cf. Heb 10:5, 7 - citing Ps 40]. This is Jesus’ consecration on His coming into this world [cf. Jn 10] - and at the Last Supper, He “consecrates” Himself [Jn 17].

5.] Prayerful Contemplation: theology always runs the risk of pondering much “about” God and not to concentrate more and more of speaking “with” Him. The Church will always need her mystics and saints to “teach” theologians - as they will need theologians to maintain their balance in their “*myst-I[sch]* cism” remembering the struggles in the long history of the Church. This profound contemplation is not a vocation reserved in any way to the august quiet of the monasteries - this is the vocation of the Church.

a. In recent centuries, the hinge on which the Devotion to the Sacred Heart turned, at least in the popular understanding of it in the minds of the faithful, is Reparation. There is also need to be nourished much by the proximity of the preceding Solemnities of **the Most Blessed Trinity** - and that of the **Most Sacred Body and Blood of Christ**. These solemnities contribute to - and receive from the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart - which in a sense, summarizes them - and sheds its own special light on them, as they do on the **Sacred Heart**.

b. Reparation, nonetheless, remains a very pure form of love for Jesus Christ - its immediate object is His august Person. Modeled on the Trinity, where Father and Son are “one principle” in the “**active spiration**” of the Holy Spirit - in similar manner, there is a union between the Hearts of Son and Mother - they are as one heart in love, sorrow and joy. Some of the real maladies of our own time are apostasy, sacrilege. The saints have noted the “outrage” “suffered” by the Trinity. The authentic life of a faithful Christian brings much honor to the Blessed Trinity. The Lord Jesus handed Himself over for the Church “so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious, with no speck, or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless...” [cf. Ep 5:25, 27].

c. The *KENOSIS* of the Father is that He has handed all over to His Son: in His Divine Filiation, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity suffered the indignity of human sin in His human nature, by dying on the Cross - and by rising to everlasting glory He restored all to His Father. Through the centuries, the “total

Christ" - the continuation of the Incarnation through the ages by the power of the Holy Spirit - is continuously horrendously wounded by the sins of her members. The Father "permits" this outrage for a time - that His Mercy might run its full sway. Reparation is offered to the Sacred Heart of the Son, in cooperation with Divine Mercy - in union eternally with the Father and the Spirit. Through divine love, this statement assumes major importance: "... For the one who sanctifies, and the ones who are sanctified, are of the same stock; that is why he openly calls them brothers..." [cf. Heb 2:11].

d. The Church has contemplated profoundly and fruitfully the ancient pearl of Jewish Wisdom, the Canticle of Canticles. This contemplation has provided great impetus to the movement of "reparation" in the Church, **for making up what has been lacking to the sufferings of Christ** as the ages have succeeded one another [cf. **Col 1:24, f.**]. In the **JB** note here, we read: Jesus suffered in order to establish the reign of God - and anyone who continues His work must share this suffering. Paul is not saying that he thinks his own sufferings increase the value of the redemption - since this infinite value cannot be increased by anyone. Paul willingly thinks of his sufferings as a missionary as a **participation** in those that Jesus had undergone personally in His own mission. [cf. 2 Co 1:5; Ph 1:20 +]. These are the sufferings predicted for the messianic era [cf. Mt 24:8+; Ac 14:22 +; 1 Tm 4:1 +]. These are all part of the way in which God has always intended the Church to develop. Paul is convinced that, being the missionary Christ has chosen to send into the world, he has been specially called on to experience suffering.

e. Reflecting on the Canticle of Canticles, the Church discovered a certain "tenderness" in this devotion, as well as the Mission to serve to make the beloved Spouse more beloved! [cf. Blaise ARMINJON, *The Cantata of Love. A Verse by Verse Reading of the Song of Songs*. San Francisco: Ignatius 1983; Roland E. MURPHY, O. Carm., *The Song of Songs*. Minneapolis: Fortress - Hermeneia Series 1990; Marvin H. POPE, *Song of Songs*. Anchor Bible Series 7 C. Garden City: Doubleday 1977]. The Church has long been moved by its verses: "... You ravish my heart [wound] my sister, my promised bride..." [4:9] - "... For love is strong as death... love no flood can drench, no torrents drown..." [cf. 8:6, ff.]. St. Bonaventure coined the phrase: "from the visible wound in His flesh the Church can ponder the invisible wound of His Heart".

f. From the sponsal image, the Church has received much insight: there is the basic theme of the challenge of mutual love: "... anyone who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him..." [cf. 1 Co 6:17]. After Peter's terrible three-fold failure, the Lord only wanted three-fold love in return: "Do you love me...? [cf. Jn21:15, ff.]. The unknown Penitent of the Miserere imposed his own penance for his sin: "... I shall teach transgressors the way to you, and to you, sinners will return..." [cf. Ps 51:

13]. All of this is the process of “re-loving”, “returning love for love.” The Lord had “set His **Heart** on His people because He loves them [cf. Dt 7:7]. Being the Chosen of the Lord, He hovers over this people with a divine “Jealousy”. The Church ponders through the centuries: “... My people, what have I done to you? how have I been a burden to you? Answer me! ... [cf. Mi 6:3].

g. The Apocalypse challenges the Church through the Letter to Ephesus: “... I know that you have patience, that you have suffered for my name without growing tired. Nevertheless, I have this complaint to make; you have less love now than you used to ...” cf. Rv 2: 3, f.]. As John “re-presented” the Church in receiving Christ’s Mother on Calvary, and “made room for her in his own home” [cf. Jn 19:26, f.] - he is a Model of the Church in his “leaning” on the side of Christ: “... the disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus...” [cf. Jn 13:25] - “... the disciple Jesus loved was the one who had leaned on his breast at the supper...” [cf. Jn 21:29]. This two-fold “leaning” on the side of Christ leads the 4th Gospel to speak at least three times of the Sacred Stigmata, and the wound in Jesus’ side: “...one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance... [19:34] - “... Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them: ‘Peace be with you.’ and showed them his hands and his side...” [cf. 20:20] - “... Jesus spoke to Thomas: ‘Put your finger here; look here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe...’ [cf. 20:27.f.]. It is only the 4th Gospel that mentions that wound in the side.

5.] Eucharistic Adoration: “... knock and it will be opened to you...” [cf. Mt 7:7; Lk 11: 9, ff.] - “... Look, I am standing at the door, knocking, If one of you hears me calling, and opens the door, I will come into share his meal, side by side with him...” [cf. Letter to Laodiceia, near the end of the 7 “Letters” - Rv 3:20, f.]. In the union of hearts, and spirit, characteristic of authentic love, high on the list comes mutual, **total self-giving**, expressing the “**Principle of Totality**”. [for these notes, cf. Alfredo Carminati, SCJ, *E’ venuto nell’acqua e nel sangue. Riflessione biblica - patristica*. Bologna: EDB 1978, pp. 150-158]:

a. Our “vocation” as a priestly people challenges all believers to a life of cult and obedience to God’s Word, a life of oblation: “... Every high priest has been taken out of mankind and is appointed to act for men in their relations with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins...” [cf. Heb 5:1] - “... you, too, [are] the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, may be living stones making a spiritual house...” [cf. 1 P 2:4, ff.] - “... Think of God’s mercy, my brothers and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God...” [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.].

1.] The Blood and Water flowing from the Pierced Side of Jesus on the Cross offer us the “consecration”, “incorporation” in the Sacrifice of Jesus

through the infusion of the Holy Spirit - to serve the Lord God as **a Liturgy of Life**: "... how much more effectively the blood of Christ, who offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from dead actions so that we do our service [offer our Liturgy] to the living God..." [cf. Heb 9:14]. - "... These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, now they stand in front of God's throne and serve him night and day in his sanctuary..." [cf. Rv 7:14, f.].

2.] Such as these are the genuine "adorers" so earnestly "sought" by the Lord God Himself: "... But the Hour will come - in fact it is here already - when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth..." [cf. Jn 4:23, f.] - "... we are the real people ... who worship in accordance with the Spirit of God..." [cf. Ph 3:3].

3.] Such "worshippers" offer the authentic Liturgy, **the oblation of their own lives**, the fruits of the Holy Spirit Himself in their lives: "... The reason why I have written to you and to put some things rather strongly is to refresh your memories, since God has given me this special position. He has appointed me as a priest of Jesus Christ, and I am to carry out my priestly duty by bringing the Good News from God to the pagans, and so make them acceptable as an offering, made holy by the Holy Spirit..." [cf. Rm 15:15, f.]. - "... Let me put it like this: if you are guided by the Holy Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence ... What the spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control. You cannot belong to Christ unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desire..." [cf. Ga 5:16, 22, f.].

b. It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling deep within us who transforms our bodies, our lives, which were acquired at such a dear price, and have made them participate in the New Temple of God, the Risen Christ: "... Your body, you know, is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are not your own property: you have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the Glory of God..." [cf. I Co 6:19, f.].

1.] This "priestly" aspect of the Christian life is that of offering existence as an oblation, also in reparation - to cooperate with Christ who has offered Himself as a "Ransom". The "sacramental sign" of this is the Pierced Side of Jesus, gradually opening up to the Church as devotion to the Sacred Heart. While dying, Christ has become the "sacrament" of our own priestly oblation to the Father in the Holy Spirit. From our "unconsecrated" state we have come back to the Lord God, as our Temple - offering to Him the tasks of the daily liturgy of life: "... But from the farthest east to the farthest west my name is honored among the nations and

everywhere a sacrifice of incense is offered to my name and a pure offering too, since my name is honored among the nations... [cf. MI 1:11, f.] - "...the Lord will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and then they will make the offering to God as it should be made.." [cf. MI 3:3, f.].

2.] Such priests are supported by the **Priestly Fidelity** of Jesus Christ which is shared with all the baptized through His Blood and the Water that flowed from His Pierced Side: "... how much more effectively the blood of Christ who offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice can purify our inner self..." [cf. Heb 9:14]. - "...when we were baptized we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we might live a new life..." [cf. Rm 6:4]. By giving His blood and His Spirit symbolized in the water to all the faithful, Christ invites all to be united to His Paschal **Oblation** to be completed under the influence of the Eternal Spirit.

3.] Having been made sharers in His Eternal Priesthood, we have been exhorted to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins [cf. Heb 5:1]. This "**priestly oblation**" is not limited to the hierarchical ministers consecrated through the Sacrament of Holy Order. Through Baptism, all are called to make this oblation of sacrifice, reparation - the entire Christian race, is being challenged by the Prince of the Apostles - the Lord Himself is inviting all to consecrate this oblation through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation [cf. Heb 5:3; I P 2:9]: "... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his own wonderful light ..." [cf. **SC** 12; **LG** 10-12, 34; **GS** 43; **AA** 3; **PO** 2; **CCC** 1119, 1121, 1268, 1546].

4.] The Pierced Christ remains the great "Sacrament" of

- the divine reparative action in its varying aspects of Libération from Sin, Redemption, Expiation];

- as well as in its aspects of priestly acquisition for God, through Reconciliation, Renewal, Consecration, Salvation;

- the Pierced Christ is the "Source" of human reparation in its aspects of Conversion, Revision of Life, Return to the Lord, committed Discipleship and Priestly Oblation.

5.] The Hebrews' challenge is a clear exhortation to live the priestly and oblationary aspect of reparation. This implies that Priestly Service flowing from Baptism and Confirmation in view of which God has come to free us from the human condition of slavery, and to acquire this People for Himself: "... I tell you most

solemnly, everyone who commits sin is its slave. Now the slave's place in the house is not assured, but the son's place is assured..." cf. Jn 8:34].

6.] The entire work of Israel's Liberation from the House of Slavery due to their sin is to transform into His People into His Servants: "... So now, fear Yahweh, and serve him perfectly and sincerely; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve Yahweh..." [cf. Jos 24:14]. - "...After you led the people out of Egypt, you are to offer worship to God on the mountain... "... I shall be with you, was the answer [Moses received from the burning bush] and this is the sign by which you shall know that it is I who have sent you..." [cf. Ex 3:12]. - All has been orientated toward His "Service": "Listen, Israel, Yahweh, our God, is the one Yahweh. You shall ...let my people go to offer me worship in the wilderness..." [cf. Ex 7:16]. This people is "acquired" by the Lord to be a holy nation, consecrated as priests [cf. ex 19:4, ff.]. The first duty of "service" is expressed in the *SHEMA ISRAEL*: "... Listen, Israel: there is only one God. You shall love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, with all your soul and with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your **heart**! [cf. Dt 6:4, ff.].

7.] There are these texts that ask for our meditation: [cf. above for Ex 19: 5, f.:

"... For when I brought your ancestors out of the land of slavery, I said nothing to them, gave them no orders, about holocaust and sacrifice. These were my orders: Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Follow right to the end the way that I shall set out for you, and you will prosper. [cf. Jr 7: 22, f.]

"... what I want is love, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not holocausts..." [Cf. Ho 6:6 – cf. also Mt 9:13; 12:7].

"... What is good has been explained to you ... this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God..." [cf. Mi 6:6, ff.].

"...You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, opened my ear - you asked no holocaust or sacrifice for sin. Then I said: Here I am! I am coming! ..." [cf. Ps 40: 7, ff.]

"...My sacrifice is this broken spirit, you will not scorn this crushed and broken heart..." [cf. Ps 51:18, f.].

8.] The "service" asked by the Lord is not exclusively, or even principally "ritual" - even though this has its place: "Do this in commemoration of Me!" What the Risen Lord asks of all is the living of each one's "consecration" in the

Blood [cf. Heb 13:12] and in the Spirit [cf. 1 Co 6:11]: "... Jesus suffered outside the gate to sanctify people in His blood...." [cf. Heb 13:12, f].

- "...you have been washed clean, and sanctified, and justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit of our God..." [cf. 1 Co 6:11].

c. Christian faith is presented as a sacrificial action one that is very pleasing to God: "... And then, if my blood has to be shed as part of your own sacrifice and offering - which is your faith - I shall still be happy and rejoice with all of you..." [cf. Ph 2:17]. There is a very genuine cult in the committed listening to the Word of God: "... Say this to the House of Jacob, declare this to the sons of Israel. You yourselves have seen... how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. From this you know that now, if you obey my voice and hold fast to my covenant, you of all the nations shall be my very own for all the earth is mine. I will count you as a kingdom of priests..." [cf. Ex 19: 4, ff.]. - "... Is the pleasure of Yahweh in holocausts and sacrifices, or in obedience to the voice of Yahweh? Yes, obedience is better than sacrifice, submissiveness is better than the fat of rams..." [cf. 1 S 15:22]. - "... I am bringing disaster on this people, it is the fruit of their apostasy, since they have not listened to my words and, as for my Law, they have rejected that. What do I care about incense imported from Sheba, or fragrant cane from a distant country...?" [cf. Jr 6:19, f.] -

d. This word of God "purifies": "... You are pruned already by means of the word that I have spoken to you..." [cf. Jn 15:3] - It is a word which "consecrates": "... Consecrate them in the truth: your word is truth..." [cf. Jn 17:17]. Israel was called to think back over the years and to ponder the wonders of the Lord - and the Lord asks for the humble invocation of His divine assistance: "... I am not finding fault with your sacrifices, those holocausts constantly before me... if I were hungry, I should not tell you for all the world is mine ... No, let thanksgiving be your sacrifice to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, then you can invoke me in your troubles..." cf. Ps 50: 7, ff.]. - "... My sacrifice is this broken spirit, you will not scorn this crushed and broken heart..." [cf. Ps 51: 17, ff.].

e. Fraternal Charity is also a Liturgy, a perfume of sweet order, a sacrifice that is most pleasing to God. The taking up the collection for the poorer churches was special to Paul: "... For doing this holy service is not only supplying all the needs of the saints but it is also increasing the amount of thanksgiving that God receives ... " [cf. 2 Co 9:12]. - "...I am fully provided for now that I have received from Epaphroditus the offering that you sent, a sweet fragrance - the sacrifice that God accepts and finds pleasing..." [cf. Ph 4:18]. Long before Paul "noticed" this, the Prophets taught HESED toward their neighbor: "... since what I want is HESED, *not* sacrifice - knowledge of God, not holocausts..." [cf. Ho 6:6] - "... What is good has been explained to you - this is what Yahweh wants of you: only this, to act justly, to

love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God...” [cf. Mi 6:8]. Jesus preached this same message: “... If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother, first, and then come back and present your offering...” [cf. Mt 5:23, f.]. - “... Go and learn the meaning of the words: What I want is mercy, not sacrifice. And indeed I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners...” [cf. Mt 9:13; 12: 7].

f. The sharing of goods [time!] is a sacrifice that pleases the Lord God: “...Keep doing good works, and sharing your resources, for these are sacrifices that please God...” [cf. Heb 13:16]. In the preparation for the Grand Jubilee and the social justice that is needed, also within the Church, the Holy Father often quotes the Prophets: “... I hate and despise your fasts, I take no pleasure in your solemn festivals. When you offer me holocausts ... I reject your oblations, and refuse to look at your sacrifices of fattened calf. Let me have no more of the din of your chanting, no more of your strumming on harps. But, let justice flow like water, and integrity like an unfailing stream...” [cf. Am 6:21, ff.]. - “... this is the sort of fast that pleases me - it is the Lord God who speaks - to break unjust fetters, and undo the thongs of the yoke... Your integrity will go before you and the glory of God behind you. Cry, and the Lord will answer, call, and He will say; I am here! ... He will give strength to your bones and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never run dry...” [cf. Is 58: 1-11].

g. Also, the wisdom of the people of God is an oblation offered to Him: “... those who serve Wisdom minister to the Holy One and the Lord loves those who love her...” [cf. Si 4:14]. Purity of mind and heart also makes of life and authentic oblation to the Lord God: offer your bodies as an oblation to the mercy of God [cf. Rm 12: 1, ff.].

h. Commitment to the New Evangelization is likewise thought of as a blessed oblation offered to the Lord. This assumes great dignity, like a liturgy offered by the High Priest: “... The God I worship spiritually by preaching the Good News of His Son knows that I never fail to mention you in my prayers...” [cf. Rm 1:9] - “...God has given me this special position. He has appointed me as a priest of Jesus Christ and I am to carry out my priestly duty by bringing the Good News from God to the pagans, and to make them acceptable as an offering, made holy by the Holy Spirit...” [cf. Rm 15:15, f.].

i. Our apostolic fatigue will be for God the good perfume of Christ” as Paul pointed out: “... Thanks be to God, who, wherever he goes, makes us, in Christ, partners of his triumph and through us is spreading the knowledge of himself, like a sweet smell everywhere. We are Christ’s incense to God for those who are being saved... In Christ, we speak as men of sincerity, as envoys of God and in God’s

presence...” [cf. 2 Co 2:15]. - This “good odor” is that of the Good Shepherd who goes looking for whatever is lost: “...there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance... [as with the finding of the drachma]: I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner... it was only right that we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found...” [cf. all of Lk 15].

j. The Father’s love for His Divine Son is expressed as for His pastoral self-giving especially for those who had no Advocate: “... The Father loves me because I lay down my life in order to take it up again...” [cf. Jn 10:17] - “.. Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? Jesus answered: It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners...” [cf. Mk 2:16] - “... Go and learn the meaning of the words: [Ho 6:6] ‘What I want is mercy not sacrifice.’ And indeed, I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners...” [cf. Mt 9:11, f]. - “... This man welcomes sinners and eats with them...” [cf. Lk 15:2] - “...He has gone to stay at a sinner’s house... the Son of Man has come to seek out what is lost...” [cf. Lk 19:7, 10]. Jesus’ prayer is for those who are “lost”: “... Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing...” [cf. Lk 23:34]. This apostolic dimension of Jesus’ prayer echoes that of the OT “greats”: Abraham: “... Approaching the Lord, Abraham said: ‘are you really going to destroy the just man with the sinner? What if there are 50 just men... perhaps 45? ... or just 40? ... maybe only 30? ... what about just ten?...!! [cf. Gn 18:23, ff.]. - Moses: “... But Moses pleaded with the Lord... so Yahweh relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened...” [cf. Ex 32: 11, f.] - “... forgive this sin of theirs...If not, then blot **me** out of the book you have written...” [cf. Ex 32: 30, ff.].

k. Our deaths will be our ultimate “Consecration”, Oblation: “... If my blood is to be shed as part of your own sacrifice and offering - which is your faith - I shall still be happy...” [cf. Ph 2:17] - “... As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end - I have run the race to the finish - I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day; and not only me, but to all those who have longed for his Appearing...” [cf. 2 Tm 4: 6, ff.].

1.] This interior liturgy is often in Paul’s mind when he considers Christians as though who offer worship, moved each time by God’s Holy Spirit: “... we worship in accordance with the Spirit of God ...” [cf. Ph 3:3].

2.] St. Peter invited the early Church - perhaps on the eve of persecution - or at least, in the acceptance of each one’s lot in life as the followers of Christ: “... you, too, the holy priesthood that offers the **spiritual sacrifices** which

Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, may be living stones making a spiritual house..." [cf. I P 2:4, f.].

3.] The "theological life" is a privileged oblation made to God: faith is a surrender to God - hope is a holy abandonment - charity is union of wills.

7.] Missionary Apostolic Contemplation: "...The Church is essentially both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, zealous in action and dedicated to contemplation, present in the world, but as a pilgrim, so constituted that in her the human is directed toward and **subordinated** to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, the object of our quest..." [cf. **SC 2**]. The very special challenge given to the whole Church can be traced back to the Prophet Zechariah: they will **look** on the one they have pierced [cf. Zc 12"10, f.' Jn 19:37]. This contemplation of the Pierced One is an invitation to reflection in repentance, which feeds the hope of the Church, and can move all who persevere in it to continuing conversion. This contemplation appeals for our fidelity, puts in motion the priestly dedication of our baptismal consecration. This concentration on the mystery of the Pierced One reminds us that this is the Spouse of the Church, offering nuptials to the hesitant Bride. This contemplation asks for a Response to **the Principle of Totality** - encouraging a life-long oblation to God for the service of the Church.

a. The contemplation of the Pierced One nourishes our hope [cf. Jn 3:14, ff.], and arouses in us the inspiration to invocation [cf. Ps 50:15]. This invites the yearning of the "doe for the living springs" [cf. Ps 42-43] - for the font of **the streams of salvation** that open up for the Church of every age. There is a need to bathe our garment in **the bath of His precious blood** that delivers from sin [cf. Rv 1:5]. We have been "acquired" as a priestly people [cf. Rv 5: 9, f.]. This enables us to offer a **liturgy** that is without stain, truly pleasing to God [cf. Heb 9:13, f.; 13:12]. The Holy Spirit washes the Church from all her impurities [cf. I Co 6:11; Zc 13:1] - and heals us from the serpent sting of sin [cf. Rm 8:2]. This opens up the pathway toward a life-long *METANOIA* [cf. Ac 11:15, f., 18]. We are truly purchased, acquired as the priestly people of God [cf. Ep 1: 13, f.] - being constantly transformed into **New Creatures** [cf. Ezk 36:25, ff.; Tt 3:5]. In this way, the faithful are "consecrated" to the Lord [cf. I Co 6: 11] and enabled to glorify God also in our bodies as He comes to dwell within [cf. I Co 6:19, f.]. Each believer then becomes a Temple of Prayer, a House of God [cf. Ga 4:6; Rm 8:26, f.]. This hope inspires the Exodus of each day, and fidelity all through the life-long journey to the Heavenly Home.

b. The contemplation of the Pierced One helps the believer to continue along the path of conversion in the overcoming of the "old person, the former way of life" [cf. Ep 4:22] - that would keep one far from betraying Him [cf. Jn 6:14, f., 70, f.] - to avoid the Pharisaical conduct in His regard [cf. Mk 8:11, 15; Lk 23:8] - this

profound contemplation helps the Church to avoid all giving in to the spirit of this world [cf. Heb 13: 13, f.] - and inspires believers to accept the Suffering Servant Christology which ends in His glory [cf. Is 53:5, 10]. Jesus applied this imagery to Himself in speaking with His disciples [cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10: 33, f.]. The Pierced One has inspired countless generations to follow after Jesus Christ.

c. This vision of the Pierced One sustains one in the pilgrimage of fidelity, in the daily commitment to put on the new person [cf. Ep 4:24]. This is the way to the life according to the Spirit, the life that must be lived in the Spirit [cf. Rm 6: 10, f.]. The life of holiness and “justice” is inspired by this ICON - the Pierced One is still recognized as Risen from the dead by **the signs of immolation retained in His body** [cf. Rm 1:4; 1 Tm 3:16]. Those who perseveringly contemplate the Pierced One can be made into a New Creation [cf. 2 Co 5:17] - born from the side of Christ, committed to the renewal that can only be achieved by the life in the Spirit [6:4; 7:6], like the Risen Who lives only for God [cf. Rm 6:10].

d. The Pierced One involves those who contemplate Him into the Oblation of His immaculate Gift of Himself to His Father, in order to purify and to consecrate others in the service of the living God [cf. Heb 9: 13, f.; Jn 17:19]. The People of God have been acquired by Jesus at a dear price as His Priestly People - this makes of all of the Christian life a priestly oblation [cf. Heb 5:1]. These offerings become acceptable when they are “**re-capitulated**” through Christ our Lord, our Merciful High Priest. The greatest gift that the faithful can give is a human life, fully lived through faith, hope and love - the esteem and quest for wisdom, the living of chastity, the commitment to the New Evangelization. In the end, the death of the Christian is the ultimate consecration, the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ. All of life becomes a spiritual oblation- each person becomes a “spiritual victim” offered in union with the Eucharist. Our commitment to the very mission of Christ [cf. Jn 20: 21, ff.] - through the New Evangelization - will be the greatest contribution we can make to the Grand Jubilee that is coming!

e. We are way-farers along the rugged paths of the Exodus of life - and we are called each day to follow the liberating word of God as this is mediated to us through the Church. This word consecrates us in **the streams of salvation** [cf. Is 12: 1, ff.] flowing from the open side of Christ. This is His body in which we share [cf. Col 1:24] - we are called each day to receive incorporation into the salvific flow of Christ the Head of the Church, the Savior of His Body [cf. Ep 5:23]. Our “re-capitulation” into Him brings great praise and glory to God [cf. Ep 1:9-14] so that He might indeed be our Head, control and elevate our thoughts and decisions. He is the Head of this Body, the Church [cf. Ep 4:12, 15] - it is animated by one Spirit, its soul [cf. Ep 4:4], His Temple of God [cf. Ep 2: 21, f.]. It is in the depths of the human heart thus

consecrated that there is offered the Liturgy of Human Holiness - the fruits of the Holy Spirit are here offered to God [cf. Ga 5:22, f.; Ep 5: 9].

g. Were one to reject being “re-capitulated” in Christ, Christ’s yearning to be the Head of the human race would be thwarted in this individual - this is close to the sin against the Holy Spirit, the rejection of Christ. Sin is a sabotage of this divine plan collaboration with God [cf. I Co 3:9] so that Christ might be “realized” more and more for the Father’s glory in the human soul, mind and heart. Our apostolate is priestly reparation when offered in union with Christ’s own sacrifice - this is the Paschal Liturgy of being immersed in Baptism in Christ Jesus [cf. Rm 6: 1- 11, passim]

h. The contemplation of the Pierced One enkindles in the disposed heart that sponsal love and ardor for God: as the Father has loved Christ, this is the way that He has loved the Church. His prayer, His appeal is that we “remain” in His love - for all eternity. There is no greater love that one could have than to lay down His life for His friends - and we are all those friends [cf. Jn 15: 9, 13, f.] - “... when we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we were still enemies; now that we have been reconciled, surely we may count on being saved by the life of His Son...” [cf. Rm 5:10, f.].

i. We are refreshed, washed, by that water flowing from His Pierced Side - and transfused by the Precious Blood flowing from Him - we are those called to be with Him in **a sponsal relationship**, one that is attentive, faithful [cf. Rv 19: 7, ff.; 21: 9; cf. Jn 3:29; Mk 2:19, f., Mt 9:15; 22:2]. Every day we are challenged to be committed in the strength of the waters of Baptism and in the strength of that Precious Blood we are being called to be one body with Him [cf. I Co 12: 12, f.; 6: 13, 15, 17]. We are being invited to share in His Martyrdom [cf. Rm 6:3] - each day we communicate in the cup that He had to drink being baptized in His Baptism. We are called to announce His death by the values we live [cf. 1 Co 11:26] and to do this in our own daily lives [cf. Ga 6:17]. Our vocation is to Remain with Him eternally - to live in, through, with and for Him [cf. Jn 6:56, f.]. Even in our mortal bodies and the use we make of them, we are challenged to manifest His life in ours [cf. 2 Co 4:10, f.]. This special Espousals is a sponsal communion.

j. The contemplation of the Sacred Stigmata will transfigure us from being guilty by-standers, into **faithful witnesses**. We will give testimony regarding the fullness of Jesus Christ. There will be the source of New Life that has flowed through us, making each one of us sources of the waters of life [cf. Jn 19:35]. His testimony will become ours - our food will be to try to do His will to seek His glory that we might live with Him forever. For this to be, we need to enter into His DIAKONIA [2 Co 3:8]. Our self-giving to the New Evangelization will be expressed as His word, His witness, for His glory. We are being invited to bathe in the waters of salvation [cf. Jn 9:7]. With clarified vision, like Moses on the Mountain looking into

the Promised Land [cf. Dt 34: 1, ff.] we will see the endless confines of the Reign of God. By sharing in the Streams of salvation we will find New Life, be a New Creation for the New Evangelization

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Summary

The Contemplation of the Pierced One asks for quiet listening to His Word, a life-long translation of His message in our lives. Human ex-istence is **ex-odus** all over again, all through life By drinking from the streams of salvation, like the Great High Priest Melchisedech - we can hold our heads high in victory: “ Drinking from this stream as he goes, the priest-king holds his head high in victory...” [cf. Ps 110].

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[III] The Sacred Heart and the Holy Spirit

Premise

[1] The Pierced One - the Gateway to the Sacred Heart - early impressed the Church and her Liturgy and doctrine.

[a] Pope Sixtus III in the 5th century had an engraving placed in the Baptistry of the Lateran to this effect: All who are reborn in this font hope in the Kingdom of Heaven - this font takes its source from the wound of Christ. This inscription has made its way into the New Ordo for the Baptism of Children.

[b] From the middle of the 8th century on, during the Procession on the Vigil of Easter, an antiphon to this effect would be sung: I have seen water flowing out of the temple from its right side - and all who come to this will be saved by this stream. The New Roman Missal has taken this old antiphon and placed it a the Baptismal Canticle that concludes the renewal of the baptismal promises to take place at the Paschal Vigil. This is all based on Jn [cf. 20:20, 27].

[c] The Preface for the Mass of the Sacred Heart prays: Raised up on the Cross, in His love without limit, He gave His life for us and from the wound of His side, there poured forth blood and water, symbol of the sacraments of the Church, so that all might be drawn to the Heart of the Savior, and reach with joy to the perennial font of salvation...”

[d] The contemplation of the Pierced One in the Easter liturgies might be seen as follows:

- the moment of the actual piercing is noted in the Byzantine rite at the pouring of the wine and water for Baptism, the Maronites are directed to this mystery - as are the Chaldeans and the Slavs. The "Sacrament of the Piercing" is remembered also in the old Tridentine Liturgy.

[2] Jn's gospel seems to offer "privileged" status to the reality and symbol of water in his writing:

- Jn 2: in the first Eucharistic catechesis, the "water" becomes the "good wine" of Christ [cf. Jn 2:10], His Paschal gift to those invited to the Nuptials, a sign that was worked in a Paschal climate [cf. Jn 2: 11, 13, 23]. This is already the announcement of another wine [cf. Jn 6:14, 27; 9:16, 39; 11:26, 47]. This will be the source of the joy at the messianic banquet set by the Father for the Nuptials of His Son [cf. Mt 22:2; Jn 3:29; Mk 2:19; Rv. 19:7; 21:2, 9]. As the water flowed out from the desert rock became a sign of the salvific presence of Yahweh in the midst of His people [cf. Ex 17:7] and a prophecy of the Eucharistic banquet [cf. I Co 10:1-4, 6, f., 14-22] - so, the water of Cana becomes wine, and thus the sign of the Presence of the Savior and the prophecy of the Eucharistic chalice.

- in his catechesis on Baptism [Jn 3 - in the dialogue with Nicodemus] the water becomes the sign of the regenerating Spirit [cf. 3:5] - the sacrament of a life different from that which cannot spring from the "flesh" [6:63 a]. It is the sacrament of a Pentecost which gathers the Church into a unified Body no matter how diverse may be the various social classes [cf. I Co 12:13; Jn 1:33; M 1:8; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Ac 1:5; 11:16].

- in the catechesis on the Holy Spirit and on one's being deputed for worship [cf. Jn 4], the "living water" becomes the symbol of the great Gift of God [cf. 4:10] which enables us to pray as children of God [cf. Jn 4:23, ff.; Ga 4:6; Rm 8:26, f.].

- in the catechesis on the Identity of Jesus [cf. Jn 5], the pagan sanctuary of Bethsaida that arose around the health-restoring waters [cf. Jn 5:4 - maybe a hint of the ancient Syro-Phoenician Healers] - this becomes a sign of the authentic Temple of God from which Ezk saw the healing waters flow [cf. Ezk 47: 8,ff]. This becomes a Sign of the One Who raises the dead and makes them all live again [cf. Jn 5:21] in an eternal life [cf. Jn 5:24, ff.]. Jesus heals the sick [cf. Jn 5: 6, ff.] - and wished to incorporate the resurrection [cf. Jn 5: 8, 21] and the new life free from sin [cf. Jn 5:14]. This total new healing is proper to the Servant of the Lord [cf. Is 53:5 - by His wounds, ours are healed]. He is raised up on the Healing Cross as the New Creator [cf. Jn 3:14, f.; Nb 21:7-9; Ws 16: 6-12]. This is the authentic paschal salvation [cf. Ex 15: 26; Ex 12:13, 23, 27] - this has been "institutionalized" in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, of Healing [cf. Jas 5:14, f.]. In another catechesis on Jesus'

Identity [cf. Jn 7] - this may be a continuation of the preceding [cf. Jn7: 21, ff.] - the “living water” is the Gift of Christ to those who believe in Him [cf. Jn 7: 37-39].

- in the baptismal catechesis on the “light”, on the “illumination” on faith [cf. Jn 9], the waters of Siloe - meaning the “Envoy” - [cf. Jn 9:7 - this is already the symbol of the Help from Yahweh [cf. Is 8:6]. This announces with the same name, the “One Who is Sent by God” is He who establishes the sacrament of Life for the eyes of the body and the spirit [cf. Jn 9:35-39].

- in the catechesis on Church Service [cf. Jn 13:1-17] in the washing of the feet, there is announced the necessity of baptism in order to have part with Christ [cf. Jn 13:8 b] in the Eucharist.

[3] After this panoramic over-view on the role of Water in Jn, there would be no surprise at the attention that is given to two texts in particular where Jn develops the theme of the Gift of Living Water:

“... If you [the Woman of Samaria] knew **what God is offering** and **who it is** who is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.’ ‘You have no bucket, sir, she answered, and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?’ Jesus replied: ‘Whoever drinks this water will thirst again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give, will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring welling inside of him, welling up to eternal life...” [cf. Jn 4:10-14].

“... On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood there and cried out: ‘If any man is thirsty, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me. As scripture says: **From his breast** will flow fountains of living water.’ He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive, for there was no Spirit as yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified...” [cf. Jn 7:37-39].

[4] It is apparent to many interpreters that the water that flows from the Pierced One together with the precious Blood on Calvary [cf. Jn 19:34] is the fulfillment of these prophecies. This serves as a particular sign of the mystery of salvation - and should be identified with the streams of living water, the font of salvation [cf. Is 12:1, ff; Jn 7:38].

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1. The Gift of the Living Water

a. The view is that Jesus offered a distant hint of what was his impending Paschal Mystery by Jacob’s Well to the sinful Samaritan woman - who is personally converted and becomes a well springing up to eternal life for others, whom she led

to Jesus. He opened up to her the drinking deeply of the Font of Redemption and that she would never thirst again if she would slake her awful thirst of these Springs of Salvation. When one does so, he/she becomes an Apostolic Missionary - a font of living water that bubbles unto eternal life for countless others [cf. Jn 4:10, 14].

b. The bond between the texts of the Living Water noted above with the Piercing of Jesus Christ was noted by St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage [+ 258] for those who experience an unquenchable thirst in their desert journey, the wonder of tapping a spring of salvation from the desert stone enables the people to drink: "...Those he led through the deserts never went thirsty; he made water spring for them from the rock. He split the rock and the water flowed..." [cf. Is 48:21] Jesus Christ is this rock - of the fathers of Israel guided across the desert by the Holy Spirit of Wisdom, all drank of the same spiritual stream from the same spiritual rock which followed them as they went - and **that rock was Christ** [cf. 1 Co 10: 1, ff.]. The streams of living water will flow in abundance from His breast after He ex-spires. This is the Gift of the Holy Spirit, for St. Cyprian of Carthage [+ 258], and all who believe in Him will receive it. The Spirit will come to them through Baptism - this opens up the way to drink of the cup of the Lord. Whoever will drink of these Streams of Salvation will never thirst again - other than for the Cup of the Lord's destiny.

c. Commentators on two influential bible translations [*The Jerusalem Bible* and *The Ecumenical Translation*] have been able to note that the water that flows in Jn 4:14 is clearly the **symbol of the Holy Spirit** - and these translations cite the following texts in addition to Jn 7:37-39]:

"... They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor the scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes..." [cf. Rv 7: 17].

"... The Spirit and the Bride say; 'Come.' Let everyone who listens, answer: 'Come.' Then, let all who are thirsty come: all who want it may have the water of life, and have it free..." [cf. Rv 22:17].

d. The citation of the two texts together is found in a passage from **LG 4**: "... When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth [cf. Jn 17:4] was accomplished, the **Holy Spirit** was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that he might continually sanctify the Church, and that consequently, those who believe might have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father [cf. Ep 2: 18]. He is the **Spirit of Life**, the **Fountain of Water** springing up to eternal life [cf. Jn 4:47; 7:37-39]..."

e. Jesus took up the theme of Living Water some time after His meeting with the Samaritan woman - in Jerusalem, on the Feast of Tabernacles. During those celebrations, some priests would go down and draw water from the Pool of Siloe in order to bring libations to the altar of holocausts in the Temple. There, they would implore from God the gift of the autumn rains, after the long and difficult drought of the summer months: "... Send victory like a dew, you heavens, and let the clouds rain it down. Let the earth open for salvation to spring up. Let deliverance, too, bud forth, which I, Yahweh, shall create..." [cf. Is 45:8].

f. Jesus took His inspiration from that ritual of the autumn rain as the "source" for his thoughts on the living streams: If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and may the one who believes in me drink from it [cf. Jn 7: 37, f.]. To emphasize this the more, from the times of the proleptic view forward toward the Messiah, the Father had implanted the ideal of the Living Waters. Christ makes reference to the Scriptures: as scripture says, from his breast will flow streams of living water [cf. Jn7:38]. Some questions come to the fore: to what text does Jesus refer? do the streams of living water flow forth from the Pierced Side of Christ, or from one who would believe in Him?

1.] A few possible "source" texts:

"... He brought me back to the entrance of the Temple, where a stream came out from under the Temple threshold and flowed eastward, since the Temple faced east. The water flowed from the right side of the Temple south of the altar... Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live..." [cf. Ezk 47: 1, 2, 9].

"... When that day comes, a fountain will be opened for the House of David and the citizens of Jerusalem for sin and impurity...." [cf. Zc 13:1].

"... When that day comes, running waters will issue from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea, and half of them to the western sea; they will flow summer and winter. And Yahweh will be the king of the whole world..." [cf. Zc 14: 8, f.].

2.] Another possibility: "... He had worked wonders for their ancestors ... dividing the sea, bringing them forth... leading them with a cloud by day and a fiery glow at night, splitting rocks in the wilderness, quenching their thirst with unlimited water, conjuring streams from the rock and bringing down water in torrents..." [cf. Ps 78: 16 - Lessons from Israel's History].

2. Christ is the Spiritual Rock [cf. 1 Co 10:1, ff.]. The Holy Spirit, in some way, proceeds from the Father, through the Divine Son: "...I shall ask the Father if he will give you another Paraclete..." [cf. Jn 14:15] - "... But, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you..." [v.26] - "... When the Advocate comes, whom I shall

send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who **issues** from the Father, He will be my witness..." [cf. Jn 15:26] - "... But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the **complete** truth, since he will not be speaking as from himself, but will say only what he has learned: and he will tell you of the things to come. He will glorify me, since all he tells you will be taken from what is mine..." [cf. Jn 16:13, ff.]. - "... Then the Angel showed me **the River of Life**, rising from **the Throne of God [the Father] AND [filioque] OF THE LAMB the Son]** and flowing crystal clear..." [cf. Rv 21:1]. Many exegetes have seen this as an allusion to the Trinity, since the **River of Living Water** is a symbol of the Spirit.

a. "... I will give fresh drinking water from the Well of Life free to anybody who is thirsty..." [cf. Rv 21:6]. In the OT, fresh drinking water is a symbol of life and as such will be an abundant feature of the Messianic Age [cf. Is 12:3; 55:1, f.; Jr 21:3]; Ezk 47: 1, ff. - cf. also Ps 36:8, 9; 46:4; Zc 14:8]. Water symbolizes also the life imparted by Divine Wisdom and the Law [cf. Pr 13:14; Si 15:3; 24:23-29]:

"... The wise man's teaching is a life-giving fountain, for eluding the snares of death..." [cf. Pr 13:14]. - "... [Wisdom - the TORAH] will give him the bread of understanding to eat, and the water of wisdom to drink..." [cf. Si 15:3] - "...I [Wisdom] came forth from the mouth of the Most High... I had my tent in the heights, and my throne was a pillar of cloud. All this is no more than the Book of the Covenant of the Most High God, the Law that Moses enjoined on us, an inheritance for the communities of Jacob. That is what makes wisdom brim like the Pishon, like the Tigris in the season of full fruit, what makes understanding brim over like the Euphrates, [a hint of the Rivers of Paradise] like the Jordan at harvest time... And I like a conduit from a river, like a watercourse running into a garden... I am going to water my orchard, I intend to irrigate my flower beds. And see, my conduit has grown into a river and my river has grown into a sea... I shall pour out teaching like prophecy, a legacy to future generations. Observe that I have not toiled for myself alone, but for all seeking wisdom..." [cf. Si 24 - passim].

b. St. Justin, Martyr [+ 165]: speaks of the bath prophesied by Isaiah that was to flow for the sins of Israel - this is the baptism that had been predicted; this is the only font that can purify from sin, for it is the Water of Life. The cisterns that we have dug are useless. The Martyr refers to prophetic texts: "... wash and make yourselves clean!" [cf. Is 1:16] - "... my people have committed a double crime: they have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, only to dig cisterns for themselves, leaky cisterns that do not hold water..." [cf. Jr 2:13]. St. Justin noted that this source of Living Water is Christ - this has flowed all over the world - we are called to drink from the streams of Living Water that flow from the side of Christ, as fresh water tapped from the stone.

c. St. Irenaeus [+ 200]: stated that wherever the Church is, there the Spirit of God will be found. And wherever the Spirit of God is found, there is every grace. He is the Spirit of Truth. So, for all those who drink from this are as it were, nourished from the breast of the Mother. This affords life. Some have not slaked their thirst from the font that proceeds from the Body of the Lord, but have made for themselves cisterns that do not hold fresh water. The LOGOS is the Head of the Church - in all of us there is the Spirit and He is the Living Water which the Lord freely offers to those who believe in Him with rectitude of life.

d. St. Hyppolitus [+ 235]: a disciple of Irenaeus wrote that in the Garden of Paradise there flowed an inexhaustible source of living water. The four rivers of Paradise irrigate the whole earth. This is now what happens in the Church: Christ, as the River, is announced throughout the whole world through the four Gospels. He irrigates the earth and sanctifies all those who believe in Him, according to the words of the Prophet: The streams of water flow from His Body.

e. Origen [+ 254]: it should not seem strange that Christ is the source of Living Water that proceeds from Him, and is also the Bread of Life - so, He is also compared to the nard and the perfume - He is likewise oil and for those who will allow them union with Him, will become other Christs. Someone who deeply thirsted for the Lord spoke of it as the thirst for the Living God. Whose thirst was slaked from the bosom of the hard rock? This Rock was Christ. As the doe yearns for the living streams... [cf. Ps 42-43]. If we do not thirst for these streams of Living Water, we will never find a source of fresh water. Some of those who may venerate the one God may reject the prophets - they cannot be slaked by the waters of the Holy Spirit. We cannot abandon the streams of Living water.

f. St. Ambrose of Milan [+ 397]: The Scriptures not only speak of water in reference to the Holy Spirit, but also streams of Living Water: these will flow from His breast. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is a river, a most broad river that, according to the Hebrews, flowed from the interior of Jesus as through the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah it had already been promised: "... Now towards her I send flowing peace, like a river, and like a stream in spate the glory of the nations..." [cf. Is 66:12]. Drink from Christ because He is the stone Who provides water - He is the source of life. Drink from Christ because He is the impetuous flood who delights the City of God. Drink from Christ, because He is peace. Drink from Christ, because from Him flow the streams of living water from His side. Whoever is blessed, will be the imitator of Jesus Who is the wood of life. You can never let this Tree wither because within it, dwell the riches of spiritual grace. Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the River Jordan [cf. Lk 4:1]. These are the streams of water of which the Gospel speaks: streams of Living Water will flow from His breast.

g. St. Jerome [+ 419]: The rock was struck, and the waters flowed. This Rock would say: whoever is thirsty, come and drink; from His breast will flow the streams ... The Lord, Whom Paul affirms was struck for our sins, offers endless streams of water... But, the stone in the desert alluded also to the font of Baptism and of martyrdom planned by God for us. From His side, in fact, when it was struck, let flow blood and water, and this all served as the figure of Baptism and martyrdom...

h. Pope Pius XII: in his Encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas* wrote: "... It was certainly not hard for those who heard Jesus speak these words in which He promised that a fountain of 'living water' would flow from within Him, to recall the words of the holy prophets Isaiah, Ezechiel and Zachary foretelling the Messianic kingdom and that rock from which water miraculously gushed forth when Moses struck it [cf. Is 12:3; Ezk 47:1-12; Zc 13:1; ex 17:1-7; Nb 20:7-13; 1 Co 10:4; Rv 7:17; 22:1].

Summary: It seems evident to the many commentators on all this symbolism that Jesus' saying in Jn 7:38 is something of a Targum of Ps 78:16. Then, looking ahead to Calvary, Jn 7 seems undeniably connected to the Piercing of the Side of Christ [cf. Jn 19:31-36].

3. The "Living water"

a. Jn's reflection in 7:39 needs to be contemplated also in the post-Pentecost mode. This solemn proclamation of Christ, and the Scriptures quoted by Him, all took place on the occasion of the Festival of Water, the Feast of Tabernacles. The theological transcription of Jesus and the Living Water was offered by the Apostle himself. The Apostles' faith enjoyed that more complete comprehension, as they were also taught by the glorious events regarding Christ. They were further accurately instructed by the Holy Spirit of Truth [cf. **DV** 19]. Therefore, Jn 7:39 is a most important text in this regard.

b. Jn tells us explicitly that Jesus was alluding to the Spirit that all would receive who would believe in Him. In fact, the Holy Spirit "had not yet" come to them because Jesus had not yet been glorified. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit of Christ is therefore bound to His "glorification": "... Still, I must tell you the Truth: it is for your own good that I am going because unless I go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you..." [cf. Jn 16:7] - "...He breathed on them, saying: Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained." [cf. Jn 20:22]. - "... Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit who was promised and what you see and hear is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit..." [cf. Ac 2: 33].

c. It is necessary to point out that for the 4th Evangelist, Jesus' "Glorification" already began in his self-emptying, particularly in His being raised up on the Cross: "... When you have lifted up the Son of Man then you will know that I am He... [cf. Jn 8:28] - this is the all-present God at work in and through Jesus Christ: "... But, if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them? And God said to Moses: I AM has sent me to you..." [cf. Ex 3:14].

1.] "... And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself..." [cf. Jn 12:32] - "... He will hoist a signal for the nations and assemble the outcasts of Israel; he will bring back the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the earth..." [cf. Is 11:12].

2.] "... the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert..." [cf. Jn 3:14] - "... This water flows down to the Arabah and to the sea; and flowing into the sea it makes the waters wholesome. Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live... Along the river on either bank will grow every kind of fruit tree with leaves that never wither and fruit that never fails; they will bear new fruit every month, because the water comes from the sanctuary. And their fruit will be good to eat and the leaves medicinal..." [cf. Ezk 47: 8-12]

3.] "... Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam [a name that means 'sent']. So the blind man went off and washed himself and came away with his sight restored..." [cf. Jn 9:7] - "... Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah, which flows in tranquility, and trembles before Razon, and the sons of Remaliah, the Lord will bring up against you the mighty and deep waters of the River [the King of Assyria and all his glory]..." [cf. Is 8:6]

4.] The Spirit will be sent out as healing Medicine to cure the world held captive by sin: "...those who are in Christ Jesus are not condemned is because the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death..." cf. Rm 8:2]. The Crucified is the Healer of the Lord God: "... It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick - I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners..." [cf. Mk 2:17] - "... Now at the Sheep Pool in Jerusalem there is a building with five porticoes... and under these were crowds of sick people: blind, lame, paralyzed..." [cf. Jn 5].

d. The verb "to raise up" seems to have been chosen by Jn to express also the idea of "glorification": "... See, my servant will prosper, he shall be lifted up, exalted, rise to great heights..." [cf. Is 53:12] - "... We could say much more [about the Creator] and still fall short; to put it concisely: He is All. Where shall we find sufficient power to glorify Him, since He is the Great One in all His works, the awe-inspiring God, stupendously great and wonderful in his power? Exalt the Lord in your

praises..." [cf. Si 43:30, ff.]. - "... Now raised to the heights of God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit who was promised and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit..." [cf. Ac 2:33] - "... You are Israelites and it is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, who has glorified His servant..." [cf. Ac 3:13]. The raising of Jesus up on the Cross becomes a kind of "Epiphany" of His presence to human history, the outpouring of His attracting and life-giving power.

e. The text from Ac [2:33] understands the exaltation of Christ as closely tied to the task entrusted to Him by His Father to pour out the Holy Spirit - this is what is being seen and heard in the Church of Acts. Jn anticipates the "glorification" of the Lord at the moment of His Passion and Death - it is in the raising up of Jesus on the Cross and in the piercing of His side. It is here that the 4th Evangelist sees the Lord's glorious exaltation and the explosion of a kind of "permanent Pentecost" over the Church.

f. The "Hour of the Cross" is also the "Hour of Glory": "...Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you most solemnly unless a wheat grain falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but, if it dies it yields a rich harvest..." [cf. Jn 12: 23, f.] '. - "...Father, the Hour has come, glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you..." [cf. Jn 17:1] - "... As it was his purpose to bring a great many of his children into glory, it was appropriate that God, for whom everything exists and through whom everything exists, should make perfect, through suffering, the leader who would take them to their salvation..." [cf. Heb 2:10]. The Piercing of the Side of Christ is presented in that light of Pentecost which the Apostle himself contemplated. The biblical text to which Jesus Himself refers [cf. Jn 7:38] was most indicative: the water that burst forth from the Pierced Side is the sign of the Holy Spirit which He pours out on His Church. This was represented at the foot of the Cross in the persons of Mary and John: the streams of living water flowed forth from His side. This is the reference to the Spirit whom all who will believe in Him would receive. The Spirit would come to the Church in His glorification [cf. Jn 7: 38, ff.].

g. The Spirit had not yet come to the Church because Jesus had not yet been glorified. The Cross is His glory. Convoing the representatives of the Church - Mary and John - to the foot of the Cross, an initial Pentecost moment is lived. The Piercing of the Side of Christ was seen by Jesus as the opportune "Hour" for the wondrous sacrament of the Church to flow from His side.

h. This Pentecost is purifying and re-generating new life, as predicted long before: "... I will pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed. I shall cleanse you of all your defilement and all your idols. I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give

you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you and make you keep my laws and sincerely respect by ordinances..." [cf. Ezk 36:25, ff.]. In the solemn silence of Jesus' death, the soldier precipitates the streams of salvation flowing from the pierced side. This is the Font of Living Water, flowing into eternal life. This indicates the "beginning and the growth" of the Church.

i. In the presence of Mary and John at the foot of the Cross there is worked out the Plan of God. This was long before predicted in the OT Stone in the Desert that would be tapped fresh water would burst forth from it, offering salvation to anyone who would partake of it from dying of thirst. Moses strikes the Rock and the streams of Living Water pour forth to slake the thirst of the People of God in their journey toward their Heavenly Home. This Rock was Jesus, as Paul noted [cf. I Co 10:4]. Mary and John are eye-witnesses of one of those Divine Marvels, Wonders of God. The words of the Prayer of David might apply here: "... Is there another people on earth like your people, Israel, with a God setting out to redeem them and make them his people, make them renowned, work great and terrible things on their behalf...? [cf. 2 S 7:23].

j. Mary and John at the Foot of the Cross witness the fulfillment of these lines of the Prayer of Moses: "... One breath of yours and the waters piled high - the waves stood upright... as your people pass through unharmed..." [cf. Ex 15]. - "... You must strike the rock and water will flow from it for the people to drink..." [cf. Ex 17]. This wonder was celebrated then in the Psalms and all through Israel's history [cf. Ps 78: 15, f; 95:8-9; 105:41; 106:32 - cf. also Ws 11:4; Is 43:20]. The kerygmatic presentation of Jesus as this "Spiritual Rock" is present here with the challenge that from His Pierced Side might be had the "spiritual drink" necessary for one to share in, to hold one's head high in victory [cf. Ps 110]. This is for those who are willing to undergo their own "Exodus" from the slavery of sin to the freedom of the Service of God. These faithful will be called upon to live their own Passover and strike up a New Covenant as the Lord's God's very own, special treasure, His Priestly People. The first NT witness of this kind of interpretation is from Paul [cf. I Co 10:4] perhaps a few decades or more, after the resurrection.

k. In this same letter of his, Paul also states that this the reason for the communion that needs to exist within the soul of the Church - the only Font for this is that each of the faithful partake of the one Holy Spirit: "... You can trust that God will never let you to be tried beyond your strength, and with any trial you will be given a way out of it..." [cf. I Co 10:13]. Sharing with His Church such a wide variety of gifts, all of those will help to build up the unity of the People of God, as they all flow from the one Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not provoke divisions in the People of God - even though the fires of purification are often needed to cleanse, enlighten and temper the fiber of the believers:"... all these gifts are the work of one and the

same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses. Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single body so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit, we were all baptized..." [cf. I Co 12: 11, ff.]. The terminology used by the Apostle is a clear indication that the reference to **the Holy Spirit as a drink of the Living Waters** indicates that this was an early tradition in the Church.

Summary: The consideration of the Pierced Side of Jesus as a Baptismal Font, from which the Church is born, is not mere poetry - but, is the solid teaching of the earliest kerygma of the Early Church. This is been "codified" also in the New Order for the Baptism of Infants [cf. # 245].

4. The "Paschal" Action of the Holy Spirit

a. The Latin side of the Church has always struggled a bit in focusing its Theology of the Holy Spirit. There is a unique role of the Holy Spirit to be discerned in Church life, in the Sacraments - and all of this flows from the unique role the Spirit enjoys in the life of Jesus and Mary. The Holy Spirit has a very special role to play in our own personal Passover, in all its components: its liberation, exodus, covenant, being purchased as a priestly people, for the New Life.

b. It is a relatively simple matter to grasp the deepest meaning of the Johannine "Pentecost": the Holy Spirit from the outset served as the support for Jesus in His Trials and Life: "... Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness being tempted there by the devil for forty days..." cf. Lk 4: 1, f.]. As Son of God, He was impeccable - but, the Mystery is precisely here, in His divine Filiation, He was genuinely "tempted" and "tried." In His death He died once and for all to sin and His life is life with God [cf. Rm 6:10]. This is not mere domination over the Evil One, but much more a life lived in absolute availability to the Holy Spirit. The Prince of this World [cf. Jn 12:31] is always defeated in Jesus' response in dignified silence and word, indeed as well as in symbol - with the words of truth and the message of mercy and the challenge of charity. He answers with meekness and power, pardon and hope [cf. Lk 23:46] - to the most trying, violent, persistent trials. The Messianic Trial was the effort to "separate" Him from the Father [cf. Jb 1:6 - 2:10; Ws 2:12-20, the "Wise Man"]. This is His drama of Divine Filiation [cf. Mk 15:34] in which we all share. This divine plan [cf. Jn 10:18] leads to Jesus' victory in loving obedience [cf. Heb 2:10; 5:8-9] - throughout, He is supreme in His total fidelity to His Father: "...the prince of this world is on his way. He has no power over me but the world must be brought to know that I love the Father and that I am doing exactly what the Father told me. **Come NOW, let US go! ...**" cf. Jn 14:30, f.].

c. The Holy Spirit served as Jesus' support all through His life, in His inherent unavailability to sin that He celebrated in supreme dignity at the instant of death feeling the divine "abandonment" [cf. **Ps 22** - the Prayer of the Poor Man of Hope]. He makes the perfect oblation of Himself to the Father's Plan and Will. He truly "purchased", "ransomed", "acquired" this Priestly People for the Father: "... how much more effectively the blood of Christ, who offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to God through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from all dead actions so that we do our service to the living God..." [cf. Heb 9:14].

d. In the Gift of the Holy Spirit, symbolized in the pouring forth of the Streams of Salvation from the Pierced Side of Christ, He lets us into **the deepest secrets of His Sacred Heart**. The secret of His victory must now be lived in our own "Passover" in its various dimensions:

- As a Mystery of Liberation: "... it was impossible for him to be held in the power of Hades, as David says: 'I saw the Lord before me always ... my body, too, will rest in hope...' [cf. Ac 2:24; Ps 16:8-11] - "...Now Christ has come, as the high priest of all the blessings which were to come. He has passed through the greater more perfect tent, which is better than the one made by human hands... His own blood has won an eternal redemption for us..." [cf. Hb 9: 12, f.] - "...the woman brought a male child into this world... who was taken straight up to God and to his throne..." [cf. Rv. 12:5].

- As a Mystery of the New Exodus: Moses and Elijah were appearing to him [in His Transfiguration] appearing in glory, and they were speaking of His passing [Exodus Passover] which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem [cf. Lk 9:31].

- As a Mystery of a New Covenant: "... Drink all of you from this... for this is my blood of the Covenant which is to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. From now on, I tell you, I shall not drink wine until the day I drink the new wine in the kingdom of my Father..." [cf. Mt 26:28] - "... If you keep my commandment you will **remain in my love**, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love..." [cf. Jn 15:10]

- As a Mystery of the Acquisition of a Priestly People for the Father: He can purify our inner self so that we might perform **our liturgy of life to the living God** [cf. Heb 9:14]

- As a Mystery of a New Life in Him: He is dead to sin - and this is the way we need to look on our lives now - for Him, **life is with God** and this is our challenge. [cf. Rm 6:10].

e. It is His Holy Spirit Who work out our "Liberation" from the initial sting of sin and death: "... those who are in Christ Jesus are not condemned, since it is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and

death...but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified - and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.." [cf. Rm 8:2, 11]. This Holy Spirit provides a number of functions:

- He washes, sanctifies and renders just: "... These are the sort of people some of you once were, but now you have been washed clean, and sanctified, and justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit of our God..." [cf. I Co 6:11].

- He "seals" us for the day of "Liberation": "... you have been stamped with the **seal** of the Holy Spirit and the Promise, the **pledge** of our inheritance, which brings freedom for those whom God has taken for his own to make his glory praised..." [cf. Ep 1: 13, f.] - "...the Holy Spirit of God has marked you with his **seal** for you to be set free when the day comes..." [cf. Ep 4:30]. This is the fulfillment beyond the wildest possible dreams: "...This blood will serve to mark the houses you live in. When I see the blood I will pass over you and you shall escape the destroying plague... This day is to be a day of remembrance for you ... kill the Passover victim. Then take a spray of hyssop and dip it in blood that is in the basin and sprinkle the door posts... the heads of Israel..." [cf. Ex 12:13, 22, ff.]. - "... Go through the city, all through Jerusalem, and **mark a cross** on the foreheads of all who deplore and disapprove of the filth practiced in it..." [cf. Ezk 9: 4, ff.]. - "... before you do any damage on land or on sea, wait until we have put the **seal** on the forehead of the servants of our God..." [cf. Rv 7: 3, ff.].

f. This is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit: "...I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit..." [cf. Mk 1:8] - "...the one who follows me is more powerful than I am and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire..." [cf. Mt 3:11] - "...The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit..." [cf. Jn 1:33]:

- this opens up for all believers their own "Exodus": "... all drank the same spiritual drink from the spiritual rock that followed them - that Rock was Jesus..." [cf. I Co 10:2] - "... All are baptized in Christ, clothed in Christ..." [cf. Ga 3:27]

- once again, there is a setting out from slavery to service: Have no fear! stand firm and you will see what Yahweh will do to save you TODAY..." [cf. Ex 14:13]. - "...Jesus was baptized in the Jordan..." [cf. Mk 1:9].

- an appeal to a more willing listening to God's Word: "...Half of the blood Moses took up and put into basins, the other half he cast on the altar. And taking the Book of the Covenant he read it to the **listening People**, and they said: we will

observe all that Yahweh has decreed, we will obey! Then Moses took the Blood and cast it toward the people. This is the Blood of the Covenant..." [cf. Ex 24: 7, ff.] - "... [In the temptation scene, Jesus replies to the Evil One with the Words of Scripture- cf. Mt 4: 4, 7, 10].

- the pressing invitation to follow Jesus to the desert, Gethsemane, Calvary - and the Resurrection: "... the Spirit drove him to the wilderness..." [cf. M 1:12] - "... Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil..." [cf. Mt 4:1, ff.]- "... Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness..." [cf. Lk 4:1].

- like being born blind, the Light of the World challenges us: "... As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world... Jesus said to the man: It is for judgment that I have come into the world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight, turn blind!" [cf. Jn 9:5, 35-39] - "...Yahweh went before them by day in the form of a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and by night in the form of a pillar of fire..." [cf. Ex 13:21]

- this is the Fresh Drink: the different gifts are distributed by the One Spirit, just as He chooses [cf. I Co 12:13].

- Baptism makes the believer re-live the Exodus experience: once again, the Rock of Horeb supplies for the streams of fresh water - they are called to reach out and touch the presence of God among them: "... you must strike the rock and the water will flow from it for the people to drink..." [cf. Ex 17:6, f.].

g. He is the Holy Spirit of the New and Everlasting Covenant unto the remission of sins - and Paul glories in being the "servant - Deacon - Minister" of this New Covenant.

- this is a Ministry rendered to the Spirit Who vivifies: "... all our qualifications come from God. He is the one who has given us the qualifications to be the administrators of this new covenant, which is not a covenant of written letters but of the Spirit: the written letters bring death, but the Spirit gives life..." [cf. 2 Co 3:6, 8].

- the Ministers of the New Covenant write with their lives, not with ink: "... you are a letter from Christ, written in our hearts that anybody can see and read, drawn up by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on the tablets of your living hearts..." [cf. 2 Co 3:3].

- these are the Executors of the Promises of God: "... the days are coming when I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel, Judah ... deep within them I will plant my law, writing it on their **hearts**. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people... they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest... since I will

forgive their sins and never call them to mind..." [cf. Jr 31:31-34] - "... I shall give you **a new heart** and put a new spirit in you... I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead..." [cf. Exk 36:25, ff.].

- The diaconia of the NT, its service, is the culmination of the New Exodus, the calling together to hear the Word of God and to translate it in one's life: "... the Israelites could not bear looking on the face of Moses, though it was a brightness that faded - then how much greater will be the brightness that surrounds the administering of the Spirit... [cf. 2 Co 3:8].

- there will be a new Anointing from the action of the Holy Spirit: ...you have been anointed by the Holy One and have all received the knowledge. It is not that you do not know the truth that I am writing to you, but rather because you know it already and know that no lie can come from the truth...you have not lost the anointing that he gave you, and you do not need anyone to teach you; the anointing he gave you teaches you everything. You are anointed with truth..." [cf. 1 Jn 2:20, 27].

- this penetrates deep within: "...the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you..." cf. Jn 14:26] - "... But when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will lead you to complete truth, since He will not be speaking as from himself but he will say only what he has learnt; and he will tell you of all things to come..." [cf. Jn 16:13]

h. It is the Holy Spirit who is the Pledge, the Ransom for us all, acquired to bring praise and glory to God: "... He is the Pledge of our inheritance which brings freedom for those whom God has taken for his own, to make his glory praised..." [cf. Ep 1:14]. This is the Holy Spirit of God, indwelling within us - and by so doing, He renders us "his", pertaining to Christ: "... Your interests are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ, you would not belong to Him..." [cf. Rm 8:9] - The Holy Spirit is indeed given to us as a Pledge of our inheritance: "... Remember it is God Himself who assures us all, and you, of our standing in Christ and has anointed us, marking us with his seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, that we carry in our hearts..." [cf. 2 Co 1: 21, f.].

1.] We are acquired for Him as consecrated, sealed, as priests, kings and prophets: "... Then he poured chrism on Aaron's head, **consecrating him by unction**..." [cf. Lv 8:12] - "...At this, Samuel took the horn of oil and **anointed David** where he stood with his brothers; and the spirit of Yahweh seized on David and stayed with him from that day on... "[cf. 1 S 16:13] - "...You [Elijah] are to anoint Jehu as king ... and **Elisha as prophet** to succeed you..." [cf. 1 K 19: 16].

2.] All of this is for Israel's worship, for royal freedom and for evangelical prophecy, evangelization. God made two special promises on Sinai:

- you will be **my special treasure**, set aside from among all the peoples on earth!

- you will be for me **a kingdom of priests, and a consecrated nation!**

i. These promises are enacted by the anointing with chrism, by the seal of the all holy God [cf. Ex 19: 5, f.]. This seal is impressed on the believer, who then becomes the “personal property” of the Lord God, His most precious belonging. In that unction, there is consecrated the priest, the king and the prophet, in the bosom of the New People of God. The Apostle St. Peter explicitly will cite this text from Exodus: “... But you are a chosen race - , a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people at all, and now you are the People of God; once you were outside mercy and now you have been given mercy...” [cf. I P 2:9].

1.] It is the Holy Spirit indwelling within us Who transforms us into His Temples for the glory of God [cf. I Co 6:19, f.]: “...Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the glory of God...” [cf. 1 Co 6: 19, f.].

2.] He renders us authentic adorers of the Father: “... But the hour will come - in fact it is here already - when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit and those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth...” [cf. Jn 4: 23, f.].

3.] The Spirit cries within us all the genuine **filial** prayer: “...The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons and it makes us cry out: ABBA, Father! ... The Spirit, too, comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that we could never put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God...” [cf. Rm 8:15, f., 26, f.]. - “... The proof that you are children is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries: ABBA, Father! - and it is this that makes you a son, you are not slaves any more...” [cf. G 4: 6, f.].

4.] This is our initiation into the priesthood of Jesus Christ - and this is destined to intensify as **the oblation of our lives** becomes more and more inclusive, intense. We yearn for the fullness of Jesus Christ: “... We are all to come to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of with the fullness of Christ Himself...” [cf. Ep 4:13, f.]

5.] We are called to celebrate the grandiose Liturgy of Christ's fidelity to the Father in self-denial - this brings about that **royal freedom** of the Holy Spirit:"... Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness being tempted there by the devil for forty days ... Jesus said to the devil: 'You must worship the Lord God, and serve Him alone...' [cf. Lk 4:1, 8 - and Dt 6:13]. - "... if you live by the Spirit, you will put an end to the misdeeds of the body and you will live. Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing far into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons that makes us cry out: *ABBA!* ... [cf. Rm 8:12, ff.] - "... if you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence ... What the Spirit brings, is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control... You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify your all self-indulgent passions and desires..." [cf. Ga 5: 16, 22, ff.].

6.] This "anointing" of the Holy Spirit gives rise in the world - in addition to 'a royal priesthood' also to a people which God has acquired as His very own priestly people, called out of the darkness, to sing His praises.

This text in Peter is a "composite" - its basic font is Ex 19:6 - with St. Peter has added the part of being called out of the darkness to sing the praises of the Lord.

7.] The source for this addition seems to be IInd Is: "... The wild beasts will honor me, jackals and ostriches, because I am putting water in the wilderness, rivers in the wild, to give my chosen people a drink. The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises..." [cf. Is 43:20, f.].

8.] This "drink" from the **Streams of Salvation** seems to have in mind Christian Baptism: "... in the one Spirit, we were all baptized..." [cf. I Co 12:13]. Peter was able to challenge the early Church by tapping into the prophetic texts to commit the "baptized" to announce the Word of God, and to participate in the New Evangelization.

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CONCLUSION

THE SACRED HEART AND THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY

[1] There are two present Church Events of major importance to which this aspect of the Sacred Heart Devotion might both contribute - and from which it can receive much: **The Catechism of the Catholic Church** [October 11, 1992] - and **The New Evangelization for the Grand Jubilee of the Year 2000.**

[2] The Holy Spirit is constantly at work raising up new priestly, royal and prophetic aspects of the Church - restoring and deepening this New and Everlasting Covenant with the GOD OF MERCY: "... Before our conversion, our sinful passions, quite unsubdued by the Law, fertilized our bodies to make them give birth to death. But now we are rid of the Law freed by death from our imprisonment, free to serve in the new spiritual way and not the old way of a written Law..." [cf. Rm 7: 6, ff.] - "...how much greater will be the brightness [over that shining on Moses' face - cf. Ex 32:16; 34:29-35] that surrounds the administering of the Holy Spirit...for if there was any splendor administering condemnation, there must be very much greater splendor in administering justification! [cf. 2 Co 3: 8, f.] - "... We can all know we are living in Him and h is living in us for he lets us share his Spirit..." [cf. I Jn 4:13].

[3] All this recalls for us the ancient challenge of Ezechiel: "... I shall pour clean water over you and you shall be cleansed; I shall cleanse you of all your defilement and all your idols. I shall give you **a new heart**, and put a new spirit in you. I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you **a heart of flesh** instead. I shall put my spirit in you and make you keep my laws and sincerely respect my observances...." [cf. Ezk 36:25].

[4] This asks for our correspondence: "... A slave, when he is called by the Lord, becomes the Lord's freedman, and a freeman called in the Lord becomes Christ's slave. You have all been bought and paid for; do not be the slaves of other men. Each one of you, my brothers, should stay as he was before God at the time of his call..." [cf. I Co 7: 22, f.].

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a. The Catechism of the Catholic Church

478: The Heart of the Incarnate Word: Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony, and his Passion and gave himself up for each one of us. 'The Son of God ... loved me and gave himself up for me' [Ga 2:20] He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation [cf. Jn 19:34] 'is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that ... love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the

eternal Father and all human beings ‘without exception’ [Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas* DS 3924; 3812].

[cf. Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, 1943 - DS 3812: “... But such a most loving knowledge as the divine Redeemer from the first moment of His Incarnation bestowed upon us, surpasses any zealous power of the human mind; since through that beatific vision, which He began to enjoy when He had hardly been conceived in the womb of the Mother of God, He has the members of His mystical body always and constantly present to Him, and He embraces all with His redeeming love.” [cf. *The Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. A Compendium of Texts referred to in the CCC*. Ignatius 1994, p. 151]

766: The Church is born primarily of Christ’s total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the Cross. ‘The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus [LK3; cf. Jn 19:34] For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church [SC 5]. As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam’s side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the Cross [St. Ambrose].

1439: The process of conversion and repentance was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the center of which is the merciful Father [cf. Lk 15:11-24]: the fascination of illusory freedom, the abandonment of the father’s house; the extreme misery in which the son finds himself after squandering his fortune; his deep humiliation at finding himself obliged to feed swine, and still worse, at wanting to feed on the husks the pigs ate; his reflection on all he has lost; his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father; the journey back; the father’s generous welcome; the father’s joy - all these are characteristic of the process of conversion. The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet are symbols of that new life - pure, worthy, and joyful - of anyone who returns to God and to the bosom of his family, which is the Church. Only the heart of Christ who knows the depths of his Father’s love could reveal to us the abyss of his mercy in so simple and beautiful a way.

2669: ¶ The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the Heart of Jesus just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the Incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins. Christian prayer loves to follow the way of the cross in the Savior’s steps. The stations from the Praetorium to Golgotha and the tomb trace the way of Jesus, who by his holy Cross has redeemed the world.

Pastores Dabo Vobis # 49 c [Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1992 - On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day: [Spiritual Formation]: “...Formation, which aims at giving oneself generously and freely, which is something helped also by the communal structure which preparation to the priesthood normally takes, is a necessary condition for one who is called to be a manifestation and image of the good shepherd, who gives life [cf. Jn 10: 11, 15]. From this point of view, spiritual formation has and should develop its own inherent pastoral and charitable dimension, and can profitably make use of a proper devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one that is both strong and tender. This is a point made by the Synod Fathers: ‘When we speak of forming future priests in the spirituality of the heart of the Lord, we mean they should lead lives that are a response to the love and affection of Christ the priest and good shepherd: to his love for the Father in the Holy Spirit, and to his love toward men that was so great as to lead him to give his life in sacrifice for them.’”

1.] **The Human Heart in Response**

368: The spiritual tradition of the Church also emphasizes the **heart**, in the biblical sense of the depths of one’s being, where the person decides for, or against God.

1431: Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God **with all our heart** and an end to sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one’s life, with hope in God’s mercy and trust in the help of his grace. **This conversion of heart** is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus* [affliction of spirit and **compunctio cordis** [**repentance of heart** - Trent: DS 1676-1678; 1705. Roman Catechism, II, V, 4].

1764: The passions are natural components of the human psyche; they form the passageway and ensure the connection between the life of the sense and the life of the mind. Our Lord called **man’s heart** the source from which the passion’s spring

2517 - 2520: [The Ninth Commandment]: **Purification of the Heart:**

“The heart is the seat of moral personality: ‘Out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication...’ [cf. Mt 15: 19]. The struggle against carnal covetousness entails **purifying the heart** and practicing temperance. Remain simple and innocent, and you will be like little children who do not know the evil that destroys man’s life. [Pastor Hermes]

“The sixth beatitude proclaims: ‘**Blessed are the pure of heart**, for they shall see God.’ [Mt 5:8]. [**Pure in heart**] refers to those who have attuned their intellects and wills to the demands of God’s holiness, chiefly in three areas: charity [cf. I Tm 4:3-9;

2 Tm 2:23-26]; chastity, or sexual rectitude [cf. 1 Tm 4:7; Col 3:5; Ep 4:19]; love of truth and orthodoxy of faith [Tt 1:15; 1 Tm 1:3, f.; 2 Tm 2: 23-26] There is a connection between **purity of heart**, of body and of faith. The faithful must believe the articles of the Creed 'so that by believing they may obey God, by obeying may live well, by living well may **purify their hearts**, and with pure hearts may understand what they believe.' [St. Augustine, *De Fide et Symbolo* 10 - PL 40, 196].

"The '**pure in heart**' are promised that they will see God face to face and be like him [cf. 1 Co 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2] **Purity of heart** is the precondition of the vision of God. Even now it enables us to see according to God, to accept others as 'neighbors'; it lets us perceive the human body - ours and our neighbor's - as a temple of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of divine beauty.

2.] The Battle for Purity

"Baptism confers on its recipient the grace of purification from all sins. But the baptized must continue to struggle against concupiscence of the flesh and disordered desires. With God's grace he will prevail

- by the virtue and gift of chastity, for chastity lets us love with **upright and undivided heart**;

- by purity of intention which consists in seeking the true end of man: with simplicity of vision, the baptized person seeks to find and to fulfill God's will in everything [cf. Rm 12:2; Col 1:10];

- by purity of vision, external and internal; by discipline of feelings and imagination; by refusing all complicity in impure thoughts that incline us to turn aside from the path of God's commandments: 'Appearance arouses yearning in fools' [cf. Ws 15:5];

- by prayer: 'I thought that continence arose from one's own powers, which I did not recognize in myself. I was foolish enough not to know... that no one can be continent unless you grant it. For you would have surely granted it if my inner groaning had reached your ears and I with firm faith had cast my cares on you. [St. Augustine, *Confessions* 6, 11].

3.] Prayer as Covenant

2562: Where does prayer come from? Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. But in naming the source of prayer, Scripture sometimes speaks of the soul, or the spirit, but most often of the **heart** [more than a thousand times]. According to Scripture, it is the **heart** that prays. If our **heart** is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.

2563: The heart is the dwelling place where I am, where I live, according to the Semitic, or Biblical expression, the **heart** is the place 'to which I withdraw.' The **heart** is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom **the human heart** and know it fully. The **heart** is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant.

4.] Forgive those who trespass against us

2843: Thus the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves us to the end [cf. Jn 13:1] become a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: 'So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother **from your heart**' [cf. Mt 18:23-25]. It is there, in fact, '**in the depth of the heart**', that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.

2844: Christian prayer extends to the forgiveness of enemies [cf. Mt 5: 43-44], transfiguring the disciple by configuring him to his Master. Forgiveness is a high-point of Christian prayer; only **hearts attuned to God's compassion** can receive the gift of prayer. Forgiveness also bears witness that, in our world, love is stronger than sin. The martyrs of yesterday and today bear this witness to Jesus. Forgiveness is the fundamental condition of the reconciliation of the children of God with their Father and of men with one another [cf. 2 Co 5:18-21; JP II, DM 14].

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b. The New Evangelization

[1] Pope John Paul II has launched his appeal regarding the New Evangelization for the New Millennium. Its "newness" might be considered from the fact that this seems to be the Voice of the Holy Spirit encouraging the Church to reach out to contemporary society. However, it is also "new", or should be by its refreshing, convinced, joy-filled style - as he mentioned in his own *Catechesi Tradendae* [October 16, 1979].

[2] The "**New** Evangelization" [cf. Kenneth Boyack, CSP, "What is 'New' in the New Evangelization?"] through the Pascal Mystery, God is bringing about the 'Kingdom' in all its fullness - through the power of the Holy Spirit. The **New** Creation [cf. 2 Co 5:17] has already begun. The action of the Holy Spirit in unfolding the Plan of Salvation in Christ is the "**New**" Evangelization: it must be **new** in ardor, methods and expression - a **new** definition, a **new** need to preach, with a **new** theology and a

new praxis and a **new** emphasis on action [cf. US. Bishops, *Go and Make New Disciples* 1992] - all this with a **NEW Catechism**.

- to engender enthusiasm for the faith, sharing with others;
- an invitation to all to come and hear the message of salvation;
- to foster Gospel values in society.

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Concluding Doctrinal Reflections on the SACRED HEART of JESUS

[I] Three Dimensions of the Interior Passion of Jesus Christ⁵ : these are the following:

- the Reality of the interior Passion of the Lord;
- the moment of its origin, inception, at the instant of the Incarnation;
- its Permanence.

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1.] Its Reality

1. The Heart of the Incarnate Word: "Jesus knew and loved us each and all, during His life, agony and His Passion and gave Himself up for each one of us. 'The Son of God ... loved me and gave Himself up for me' [Ga 2:20]. He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation [cf. Jn 19:34], 'is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that...love with which the divine redeemer continually loves the eternal father and all human beings' without exception. Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas* [1956]: DS 3924; cf. DS 3812 -beatific vision]. [CCC # 478]

2. Perhaps until the great medieval theologians in the 13th century, it was very difficult for thinkers after the Patristic Age to establish the reality of an interior Passion of Jesus Christ. The Fathers of the Church had to react against the Docetists to come to the conclusion that if a God had been able to suffer, this is because He had a human nature that was as truly able to suffer as our own human nature, hypostatically united to the Second Person of the Trinity. Yet, this would not inhibit that the Son of God, also in His human nature, would see His Heavenly Father, uninterruptedly, face to face:

*... But such a loving knowledge as the divine Redeemer from the first moment of His Incarnation bestowed on us, surpasses any zealous power of the human mind; since through that beatific vision which He began to enjoy when He had hardly been conceived in the womb of the Mother of God, He has the members of His mystical body always and constantly present to Him, and He embraces all with His redeeming love... [Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943, # 3812].*

⁵ cf. Edouard Glottin, SJ, *Le Coeur de Jésus. Approches anciennes et nouvelles*. Namur "Vie Consacrée 1997, pp.131-140, passim.

Theologians, then, rightfully ask the question: does this divide Christ in two: Jesus AS God, Jesus AS Man? Yet, in the human nature, the Divine Person of the Word enjoyed here on earth, as is clear from the papal teaching, the beatific vision. How this is so challenges the best theological minds. The attempts at a solution are varied, and none have been fully accepted by all:

a. St. Thomas Aquinas taught that the human soul of the Divine word suffered "indirectly" by reason of its liaison with His human body. Thus, the high point of the soul enjoyed the beatific vision, while the "inferior" part of His soul was horrendously afflicted with His physical suffering.

b. However, the human soul of Christ would have suffered also on its own, in itself Jesus Himself stated that His soul was saddened unto death [cf. Mt 26:38]. The Angelic Doctor taught that in a certain fashion, it is the entire soul of Jesus which suffered. And many of the earlier theologians somewhat blandly accepted the affirmation that the superior part of the soul had been afflicted only "indirectly". This was the manner in which St. Thomas tried to offer some explanation of this extraordinary mystery how the human soul of Jesus could at one and the same time be "blessed" while suffering.

c. The response does not satisfy all faithful believers: if Jesus' soul enjoyed a radical beatitude, which the Beatific Vision is, and yet was suffering - it would seem that His happiness would not have as yet reached its full extension. The Latin theologians would respond that Jesus was at the same time a **viator**, as well as a **comprehensor**, which implies: that from the instant of His conception, He was already beatified because of His infused consciousness of His divine being, hypostatically united to His Divine Person throughout His life.

3. This question is most studied on the level of the human knowledge of Jesus Christ⁶. As a **viator** [wayfarer], this human knowledge of Jesus Christ, although perfect in its own kind, would have to have been limited, even if by reason of His quality of God's Special Prophet, He had received from on high all the infused lights.. However, in so far as Jesus is simultaneously throughout His life also a **comprehensor**, in that vision which He had of Himself, as the Word, and of the Father as the Prime Source of all, and of the Holy Spirit, as the Inspirer of all goodness, Jesus transcended, in a certain manner, all time and perceived, so to speak, the world in which he lived as from its source. In the unity of this original vision, He perceived very exactly His sorrowful situation as Redeemer, both of His own present as well as of the past of His own People, and even of the future of all. From His unique reality as true God and true man, unique clarity filtrates into His

⁶ cf. Bertrand de Margerie, SJ, *The Human Knowledge of Christ*. Boston: St. Paul 1977.

Mind and Heart in order to present incessantly to His human soul, rejoicing in His suffering, the causes of His manifold agony.

4. Theologians and mystics, through the centuries, have grappled with this extraordinary hypostatic union and its full extent in the human nature of the causes of the suffering in dying Redeemer. Some of them make these distinctions:

- those from God: this would be the profound sadness coming from the many offenses that offended Him incessantly from the sins of humanity - this is what touches Jesus the most, and may offer some insight into the “Messianic Trial” that Jesus suffered in Gethsemane, leading to the bloody sweat as noted by St. Luke;

- those originating in Himself: these would have been His infused human knowledge of His impending sufferings’

- those resulting from humanity: and these could be further sub-divided into three areas:

- the suffering caused by the loss of Judas, and others like him;

- the compassion for His Mother and for each one of the members of His Mystical Body as individuals - especially, the martyrs, who would be called to suffer as He did, and for Him;

- the suffering caused by human ingratitude, particularly by the rejection of His mystery by His own People, Israel - and for the sins of Christians who crucify Him anew [cf. Heb 6:6].

5. Gethsemane deserves its own study⁷. By reason of its proximity to the culminating activities of Redemption, all these causes seem to come together and they produced in His human soul the enormous burden of an almost unsustainable anguish. In union with His Beatific Vision, this presets a real challenge for the Mystery of the Agony in Gethsemane: on the one hand, He remains hypostatically joined to the source of light in the divine eternity, and is able in this to unify past, present and future. There likewise flooded His soul those sorrowful lights that caused the extraordinary phenomenon of His blood falling to the ground like huge drops of sweat [cf. Lk 22:44].

a. The theologians strive to penetrate somewhat this mystery and offer these suggestions as to the root cause of Jesus’ agony in the Garden:

⁷cf. A. Feuillet, *L’Agonie de Gethsemani*. Paris: Gabalda 1977; M. Galizzi, *Gesù nel Getsemani*. Zurich: PAs Verlag 1972; D.M. Stanley, SJ, *Jesus in Gethsemane*. NY/Ramsey: Paulist 1980.

- **human fear:** Jesus would have known the sufferings that were just ahead - this would be an indication that He truly is “man” - and it is usual for most human beings to fear the evil of impending suffering. With Christ, whatever He assumed, He redeemed:

- **profound sadness:** this would be the result of seeing and knowing of His disciples, Apostles’ denial of Him, and their running away - it is conceivable that this vision is projected down through all human perversity until the end of time;

- **the “Messianic Trial”** - this would be the fulfillment of Jacob wrestling all night with the Angel of the Lord [cf. Gn 32:25, ff.] - or Moses and his little family being attacked in the dark of the desert night, again, by the Angel of the Lord [cf. Ex 4:24, ff.] - and how the mysterious Shepherd in Zechariah [cf. 13:7, ff.] who is “struck by God”. This is Jesus carrying out the Father’s will.

b. The mystics strive to penetrate this extraordinary phenomenon of the sweat of blood: for some, the Blood is a sign of all the sufferings that would unfold in His refined human nature from the moment of His conception. The sweat of blood is an eloquent testimony of the present sufferings He was undergoing in His divine mind and Heart; and this bloody sweat also was some kind of a prognosis of what lay ahead. This would include His own physical sufferings and the agony faced by His followers until the end of time. Thus we have a Memorial, a Presence and a Prognosis of the Lord together with His own in their agonies through the centuries, past, present and future.

c. In the Divine Head of the Mystical Body all is “re-capitulated”, not only the secret sufferings of His own Heart, but those of all the members of His Body - both “formal” as well as those in “ways known but to God” - would endure until the end of time. In this awesome instant, the Son of Man/God re-capitulates all of the temporality of this universe.

2.] Its Beginning

1. There is a long tradition that holds that just as Jesus was united to His Father in the Beatific Vision from the first instant of His Incarnation, so likewise were His sufferings present in His soul. The reasoning goes something like this: the soul of Christ, from His very entry into this world, saw the face of the Father, i.e., His Divine Paternity - and in His loving Will is contained the Plan of re-creation, the redemption of the world. The ultimate source of the Mystery of the Cross lies in the Father’s love. In the spiritual faculties known to us - intellect and will - even a human being can make their interests superior over the interests of the body. The saints in heaven now [with the exception of Mary whose body was assumed into heaven, as defined by the Church, Nov. 1, 1950] already enjoy the beatific vision.

2. An analogy with the souls of mystics might help us to understand this mystery somewhat. With the abundant infusion of supernatural lights into the souls, they are able to grasp simultaneously a multitude of understandings. The mystics and mystical theologians have been able to accept for centuries that from the first moment of His Incarnation, the soul of Christ was able to draw on His hypostatic union with God, in this unity of a vision, the simplicity and richness of which surpasses anything that a human being could imagine, a certain sublime clarity regarding His own Personal Mystery. Similarly, certain mystics of the Cross [as John of the Cross; Paul of the Cross] the supernatural illuminations that they received caused them a darkness, dolor in faith and love, that they were able to accept joyfully. In like manner, the Heart of Jesus, without losing its fundamental serenity, at the same time could be afflicted, from His very first instant of Incarnation, in the depths of His being the causes of a profound moral suffering. Paradoxically, by reason of the very perfection of His infused lights shedding light on His human consciousness the redemptive content of a vision - that while it beatifies Him, it was also comparable to an unruly sea of bitterness.

3. The Medieval theologians were hard-pressed to explain all this - with difficulties that many believers today do not face. At one time, it was reasoned that only after certain weeks of gestation would the human soul be infused into the embryo [and sadly, it was thought it took more time for a woman - 8 weeks - than a man - only four!?] to make the new conception truly "human." However, there was less trouble believing that at the very Instant of the Incarnation of the Word of God coincided with that instant in which Mary of Nazareth conceived her only Son. The usual "explanation" for this exception to the general rule was due to the fact that with Mary, faith is dealing with a virginal conception of a Divine Person. However, once this exception was accepted, it was a little less difficult in imagining that in the "fine points" of His human soul,, the depths of His being, the high-point of His heart, Jesus on entering this world would have been able to direct this aspect of his human being toward the brilliant light of God to receive therefrom a sort of "founding illumination." Much was made of this phrase from the Song of Songs and applied to Jesus, already conceived in the womb of Mary: I sleep, but My heart watches [cf. Sgs 5:2].

4. In this way, there was some "understanding" of how there could be at one and the same time an illumination that would be both painful as well as beatifying. In the Letter to the Hebrews, the founding act of Jesus Christ coming through His Incarnation as both Priest and Victim, was His whole being consecrated to doing the redemptive will of His Merciful Father [cf. Heb 10:5-7, quoting Ps 40]. This initial "coming", His "consecration" by the Father, on being sent into this world [cf. Jn 10:36] culminates at the end of His earthly sojourn, by His "consecrating" Himself [cf. Jn 17:18] for all our sakes. St. Paul offers His "explanation" of this Mystery: the

son of God, Christ Jesus, has not come as both 'yes' and 'no': He has come as **the Father's indivisible 'Yes'** [cf. 2 Co 1:19]. Since not all the moments of a human life would have the same density, as there are some that are more significant. So, this "Yes" of the Son of God expresses in a privileged manner bring together two major "moments" of His earthy sojourn: **the instant of His Incarnation, and the mysterious "Hour" of His Paschal Mystery of Self-giving.** This is Jesus' "**consecration**" - His "founding" act, His **constitutional filiation**.

5. The night before His Passion, in the upper Cenacle room of Jerusalem, Jesus handed over His own Body and Blood as He Himself would say: **For them, I consecrate Myself** [cf. Jn 17:19]. This initial Eucharistic Consecration" would then be followed by the Mystery of the Agony in Gethsemane and the holocaust on Calvary. In this context, He is more directly addressing His Father [cf. Jn 17:1], but He wants all the generations of believers to eaves-drop on this prayer. This sacrificial act is a response to the signified will of God. Implicit in this response, there is a total and loving acquiescence to the execution of the Mystery of that "Hour" - that simply is a continuation of His initial acceptance of the Father's consecration of Him in sending Him into this world [cf. Jn 10]. The Divine Word was called upon by His Father to offer His **Yes** as His oblation, in His redemptive Incarnation in its totality. Thus, from His first instant of being in the womb of His Blessed Mother, this illumination of His Heart opens up the scroll of the Divine Scriptures [cf. Rv 5:1; Heb 10:7 - CCC # 112]. There is clearly inscribed in this Divine Scroll - for those eyes opened to read, for those ears ready to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches [cf. Rv 2:7, 11,17,29; 3:6,13,22]. In these scrolls, Jesus understood and adored the singular order and the hypostatic union in which He exists in a human nature. He recognized, adored and accepted the designs of God on Him, including the Cross on which He would die. He consecrated His life, on the Cross, His death that would follow. All these causes of suffering were already present, in this mystical view, of His human soul, from that very first instant of His human being. In this sense, the entire life of Jesus served as a way of the Cross and a martyrdom.

6. From these reflections "on the first instant" of Christ's human existence, many reflections developed on the theme of sacrifice. The Greek Fathers contributed much to this, as did St. Thomas Aquinas in his time. Redemption is not limited to Holy Week, nor is the Eucharist simply the first two days of the Sacred Triduum. It is the **whole life** of Christ that is redemptive. While all does culminate on Calvary, the mystery of Redemption included the Incarnation, and all that flowed from there: the Hidden Years; Jesus' Prayer, Temptations, Preaching - His entire earthy sojourn. Since He is indeed the "New Adam", we are all included in His progeny, generated by His Precious Blood. He is the Head of the Church, [cf. Col 1:18], and we are all included in His **Capital Grace**. By this unique grace, He "recapitulates" us all in His redemptive love. He is the Head of the New Humanity,

which permits Him to merit uniquely in the name of all. And this grace, from the very first instant of His conception in the womb of His Blessed Mother, had already been perfect - He was full of grace and truth [cf. Jn 1:14] from the outset. There was in Him from the beginning the fullness of the capital Grace - it was in Him also in so far as He is the Principle, the Source of all grace. From this abundant Font of Salvation there is communicated to all the elect, as all become joined to Him [cf. GS 22] as members to their one Head [cf. 1 Co 6:15; ; 12:12; Ep 3:6; Col 3:15] , and as branches from the main vine [cf. Jn 15:5] and as little channels off the central Source. This makes of us all one sole single Mystical Person.

7. This classical doctrine had profound applications for the daily spiritual lives of dedicated Christians, particularly those suffering dense interior “nights”, or long, hard “winters.” From the very first instant, as so many spiritual theologians would testify, the Incarnation was tending toward the crucifying Stigmata - as the Capital Grace appeared as the source of deep and intense suffering, both for the Head of this Body as well as for its members. The plenitude of grace, in the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ, de Condren would write, produced two contrary effects:

- on the one hand, since this plenitude is proportioned to the infinity of the Person to whom the human nature is hypostatically united, renders its subject full of glory, and provided conditions of both pilgrimage, in order to raise the Wayfarer up to the happy state of the blessed;

- yet, on the other hand this plenitude of grace established Jesus Christ as the Head of humanity, and this for Him was also the principle within Him of deep agony.

8. Jesus ‘beatifying love was for Himself within His soul - whereas His crucifying love was all for us, and because of us. In it, He is our exemplary cause, and also merits for us super-eminent virtuous living such as He lived Himself. The members of His Body are sanctified by His own Capital Grace which permeates all the members in accord with their vocation. This crucified love provides the Streams of salvation - through the Eucharist especially, and all the sacraments generally, these offer an abundant share in the Grace and Life of Jesus Himself.

3.] Its Permanence

1. It can be abundantly consoling for all thoughtful believers to ponder in contemplation this first instant of Jesus’ redemptive Incarnation. This allows one to think more profoundly about Jesus’ entire life as redemptive - and the Eucharist is the Sacrament and sacrifice of His entire life. This first instant of His salvific Incarnation is that central mystery of the Father’s Mercy that then works through all the mysteries of his redemptive sojourn on earth - this is the source of the entire sacramental system. This mystery is a kind of a synopsis, breviary, of all the mysteries of Jesus’ life on earth, and this strengthens one’s will and opens one p

further for the flow of grace from Him. In a certain sense, all that Jesus did after that first instant of His Redemptive Incarnation is simply the exterior carrying out of the Father's Plan which He was consecrated to fulfill. All in Him derives from His own loving, initial acceptance of the Father's merciful will - His "Yes" to the Father's will is the efficacious root of all of His exterior actions. from which is derived the deepest interior merit. By His act of oblation unto death, Jesus has prolonged this same infinite merit, thus rendering it uninterrupted throughout His entire life. this continual oblation of Jesus Christ is simply the sequence of the unique merit of His initial acceptance of the Father's will. In following the father's merciful will and decision, this received its ultimate perfection in His death.

2. When a believer "re-reads" the entire Paschal Mystery through the Sacred Heart of Jesus this opens up the contemplation of Christ's entire life as an indivisible act of His unique interior sacrifice. Every visible sacrifice is, in the Augustinian school, the sacrament of an invisible sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Cross - and also that of the Eucharist which is derived from it. These are the signs of the sacrifice of Himself wherein Jesus has immolated without limit or interruption His own spirit in the immense Temple of His own Heart. In this Temple of the Sacred Heart there is offered continuously from His conception until the very hour of His death under manners that are inexpressible to every created spirit. His entire earthly sojourn, then, in this conception, is like one Solemn oblation of the Eucharist in which Jesus is at one and the same time both Priest and Victim⁸.

3. In the theology of the Sacred Heart of Jesus it is noted by some commentators that this Heart presents Itself as the place of the incessant presence of Jesus in His love and suffering. Living among human beings, He remained immersed in this mystery of an immense capacity of His own Sacred Heart for love and mercy. Throughout the course of His entire earthly sojourn, this was never interrupted. The firm constancy of this living mercy, and also of this profound suffering is an aspect of this mystery that knows no bounds, nor adequate expression. The Paschal Mystery remains one and indivisible: throughout His entire earthy sojourn Jesus was submerged in abject bitterness, but sustained by His uninterrupted act of ardent charity.

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⁸cf. Cong. for the Clergy, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium - Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments, and Leader of the Community*. March 19, 1999. c. 4, n. 2: *Sacerdos et Hostia*.

[II] Consecration⁹

1.] Jesus, the First Consecrated [Jn 10:36; 17:18]

*...the Father has **consecrated** [Me] and sent [Me] into the world ... As you sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake, I **consecrate** Myself so that they, too, may be **consecrated** in truth...*

a. The word “consecrate” has wide usage in common parlance. Some individuals ‘consecrate’ their time to sport; others ‘consecrate’ their youth to study. Parents ‘consecrate’ their entire lives to the well-being of their children. In all these cases, “to consecrate” consists in the gift of whatever one possesses as the most dear in order to obtain an important result for oneself or for others.

b. However, more precisely, “consecration” is close to the word “sacred” - this “consecration” is what renders sacred, by dedicating a person, place or thing to God. Chalices, altars or buildings may be “consecrated” when they are set aside for the worship of God, and withdrawn from profane use. Sometimes when one is baptized, a child, or person, becomes “consecrated” to the Blessed Virgin Mary. A person “consecrated: to God may renounce one personal aspect of life in order to relate it more fully to God. A “consecrated life” is a life in which one keeps before him/her as priorities the service and love of God. The ideal of “consecrated” persons is that all that lies ahead is for God, accompanied by the prayer that one would never do anything unworthy of God.

c. When one is “consecrated” to the Sacred Heart, what becomes most dear to that person is that he/she is dedicated to the Lord and sanctified by Him. The result is a belonging to God **through a more complete conformity to the divine will**. And it is this which the Sacred Heart asks of anyone making this consecration. Jesus Himself was fully “consecrated” as the Messiah, to the Father’s Will, through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He said that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, for He had been consecrated by Him, in order to bring the good news to the poor [cf. Lk 4:18]. This is Jesus’ debut to the public life pronounced in the synagogue of Nazareth. So many passages give witness to this filial constitution of Jesus: His loving and total commitment to His Father’s will. This is noted in His Presentation in the temple; at His Baptism and Transfiguration; in His Final Priestly Prayer [Jn 17]. Each time, Jesus’ “mind”, which we are invited to “put on” [cf. Ph 2:5], is a recalling to our minds and hearts **His own primordial, fundamental consecration, total Self-giving** to the Father, and then to His work of salvation which would find its accomplishment in the Paschal Mystery. This Paschal Consecration of Jesus will have

⁹Paul de Meester, *Redécouvrir le Sacre’ Coeur*. Paris: Mediaspaul. Maranatha 37. 1996, pp.93-98, passim; cf. R. Laurentin, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*. San Francisco: Ignatius 1991

for its ultimate goal and effect the sanctifying consecration of His disciples: He consecrates Himself for these, and sanctifies Himself, so that they, too, will be sanctified, consecrated in truth [cf. Jn 17:19]. For every Christian, Consecration will be a sharing, a participation in and a prolonging through history of Jesus' zeal so that the Father will be glorified, known and loved in truth.

2.] Baptismal Consecration

a. Jesus Christ Himself, then, is the first of the "consecrated", and it might even be said the "Only Consecrated" - which means that every other consecration can only be something of a participation in His Total Consecration, and all others relate to this One. It is through Baptism that every believer is "consecrated" to Jesus Christ, and anointed by the Holy Spirit. In the consecratory anointing of Baptism, the Father bestows the capacity of sharing in this unique Divine Consecration of Jesus Christ, by sending us the Holy Spirit. The baptized one accepts this double gift of God in allowing the Spirit to indwell in one's soul. The Baptismal anointing is a plunge on the part of the believer into the very holiness of God, which is a primordial consecration to Him.

b. Baptismal Consecration can at times be deployed and completed, orientated, by Religious Consecration. This latter is but the ulterior confirmation of a particular call for a sanctified life inscribed in the vows, or promises. However, this religious consecration is already prefigured in the demands of Baptism, recalled to mind by a personal invitation to follow Jesus Christ, to the very end of life, in a radical self-giving, the most total, without any holding back. It needs to be noted, however, that to love God totally, to "seek the absolute" is not exclusive to religious life - in different ways, all are called to the one holiness. The offering of one's day, St. Ignatius' *SUSCIPE*, are examples of this total self-commitment to God.

3.] Religious Consecration¹⁰

a. "Reparation" can be considered as a "loving in return" - Pius XII directed the understanding of the Mystery of the Heart of Christ to two specific cultic activities: love and reparation. A number of religious communities came to understand their specific type of consecration also as connected in a particular manner to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

b. On a very practical level it is helpful to take the word "reparation" in a very broad sense: - this would mean considering reparation to be a response in love aroused by the *agape*' in a world of sin. Before undertaking reparation by actions there is also the call to make reparation through praise of God. In this time of such hatred and violence, injustice and discrimination, the reparation due to the Lord is

¹⁰C. E. Glotin, SJ, *Le Coeur de Jésus*. Namur. Vie Consacrée 16, 1997, pp. 163-171, passim

that concern for the poor, the promotion of justice, love for the defenseless, respect for all life. This most gentle ministry responds to a sane theology of liberation from sin and death.

c. This does not mean reducing the “new” to what is “ancient”. We are all called to a contemplation unto love. The question of the missionary is: what should I do for Jesus Christ? He has shown His love in graphic form through His Pierced side - by our own love for the suffering, we return the love of Jesus Christ for the suffering of all time.

d. “In the image of Jesus, the beloved Son, ‘whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world’ [Jn 10:36], those whom God calls to follow Him are also consecrated and sent into the world to imitate His example and to continue His mission. Fundamentally, this is true of every disciple. In a special manner, however, it is true of those who, in the manner that characterizes the consecrated life, are called to follow Christ more closely, and to make Him the ‘all’ of their loves. The task of devoting themselves wholly to ‘mission’ is therefore included in their call indeed by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charisma, consecrated life itself is a mission, as was the whole of Jesus’ life. The profession of the evangelical counsels, which makes a person totally free for the service of the Gospel, is important also from this point of view. It can therefore be said that a sense of mission is essential to every institute, not only those dedicated to the active apostolic life, but also those dedicated to the contemplative life...” [VC # 72].

e. The new Code of Canon Law [# 607] makes quite clear how juridical consecration involves “the whole person”, is comparable to an espousals brought about by God, involving the full gift of self, and can only be understood as a sacrifice offered to God by which the religious’ entire existence becomes a continuous worship of God in love.

4.] Priestly Consecration: “...‘I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you’ [cf. Jn 13:15]. Formation which aims at giving oneself generously and freely, which is something helped also by the communal structure which preparation to the priesthood normally takes, is a necessary condition for one who is called to be a manifestation and image of the good shepherd, who gives life [cf. Jn 10:11, 15]. From this point of view, spiritual formation has and should develop its own inherent pastoral and charitable dimension, and can profitably make use of a proper devotion to the sacred Heart of Jesus, one that is both strong and tender. This is a point made by the Synod fathers: ‘When we speak of forming future priests in the spirituality of the heart of the Lord, we mean that they should lead lives that are a response to the love and affection of Christ the priest and good shepherd: to his love for the father in the Holy Spirit, and to His love toward men that was so great as to lead Him to give His life in sacrifice for them...’ | [VC # 49].

5.] Consecration¹¹

a.] Biblical Development: this is described as a moving, deputing an object, or person, into the sacred domain of God, involving two aspects:

- separation: One could not even touch a sacred object [cf. 2 S 6:6, ff.], and the Levites could not even look on holy things [cf. Nb 4:20];

- union with God: all that is sacred belongs to God - deputed for his service in an exclusive manner.

This “transference” to the domain of the sacred in a person asks for a conversion from self-centeredness to make more and more of a total gift of self. In one sense, “consecration” has a deep impact on one’s being, a conversion from ‘eros to *agape*’. “sacrifice”, like “consecration”, has these same two aspects:

-negative [separation]: that which is sacrifice is renounced, and totally in a “holocaust” - by means of this action, there is the following effect:

- positive [union]: somehow what is offered is transferred, “passes over” into the realm, domain of God.

“Sacrifice” and “consecration” very soon developed their own rituals by which symbolically separation was achieved leading toward union - one example might be, the burnt offerings in the desert: as they were destroyed the sweet smelling smoke [a theme of Leviticus 1:3, 9, 17, etc. etc.] went up like incense to the Lord God above. The danger with all of these was “ritualism” - sheer formalism - and thus we hear the strong enjoinder in Ps 40: “... You wanted no sacrifice, or oblation, no holocaust or sacrifice for sin...” [cf. Ps 40: vv. 6, ff.; cf. also 50:7-15; 69:30, f.]]. What is needed is the sacrifice of the heart [cf. Ps 52:10-19; Jr 31:33; Am 5:21 +; 1 S 15:22; Is 1:11-16; 58:1-8 - this is a central theme in the Book of Deuteronomy].

For Jesus Christ, the closest to Him were the down-trodden and the poor [cf. Mt 25:40] as He often identified Himself with these little ones. The Gospels always offer a special place to the “last”, the “least” - of these poor is the Kingdom of Heaven [cf. Mt 5:3; 18:2, ff.]. Mary’s *Magnificat* celebrates the *anawim*, those of “lowly state”, will be raised up with her [cf. Lk 1:52]. Jesus sets the pace: He is **consecrated from within**, by His divinity, which God unveiled to believers. In establishing His Church, Jesus also instituted consecratory rites called “sacraments”, seven of them, to cover all aspects of life: from birth, to nourishment, strengthening, pardoning, healing, choosing states in life. The most fundamental ritual is Baptism,

¹¹cf. R. Laurentin, *The Meaning of Consecration Today....* Ignatius 1992, pp. 123-141, passim

which opens up the way to the higher gifts, while making one a child of God. After being immersed into the life of the Trinity at Baptism [cf. Rm 6:1, ff.], one is incorporated into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the Eucharist

b.] Juridical Aspects: Christ personally left behind a minimum of rituals - these were developed by the Church, and we believe, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Even in Roman society, the Vestal Virgins would be “veiled”, [a **velation**] - and this came to be called a “**consecration**”. There would also be the old Roman “**dedication**” of a person, place, or thing, signified by an act of a Roman magistrate. The priestly “Pontiff” then would “consecrate” something, or someone, indicating that this from now on, would be the establishing of a “bridge” between humanity and the divinity - thus, the Pontiff is a “bridge builder”, because he “consecrates.” Profanation would be called “**execration**”, today called a “**desacralization**”.

These old Roman practices were taken over and elevated in and through the Catholic Church - a sacred ritual, carried out by a sacred person, such as a bishop, can be called a “consecration”, accomplished through “consecratory signs”. In and through these, God acts in harmony with human beings. Individuals might “consecrate” themselves through devotion, to Mary, to the sacred Heart - these are representative of interior acts - and in the long run, are prayers to the God who consecrates. All effective consecration is a gift of grace moving the soul, through faith hope and love moving the mind and human heart.

c.] Theological Analysis: in the technical and precise sense of the term, only persons can be “consecrated.” Objects are “consecrated” through an analogy of attribution - they may be instruments of sacred worship, or ritual means of holiness. What is “sacralized” in all this is the purpose present in the sign, or instrument used to adore God.

The “consecration” of the Eucharist is a unique situation - in this, what was bread and wine remains now only as accidents - their “substance” withdraws into the prime matter of bread and wine. Their profound reality is totally changed - while the appearances of bread and wine remain, far more than their “significance” or their “finalization”, their entire being changes. The Eucharist under the accidents of Bread and Wine are the personal, substantial, sacramental presence of Jesus Christ: in one meaning of “concomitance”, there are present His Body, Blood, soul and divinity - and in another sense, there is also the concomitance of the Father and Holy Spirit really present in the Eucharist.

From this, philosophers would say that the word “consecration” is not univocal - but analogical. There is need also to understand “ontological” holiness, imprinted in the soul by the sacramental character, as when Paul refers to the Romans as “saints” - and then excoriates all immoral behavior. Then there is the

“moral”, or “spiritual” holiness - that which is brought about also with the cooperation with divine grace. Theologians make these observations:

- the distinction between **being** and **acting**, as the difference between **sacramental character** and the **entitative habit called grace**, the difference between **nature** and a **faculty**. In God “to be” and “to act” are one and the same - but God adapts Himself to the needs of each in interaction - He consecrates human partners in a fundamental manner through Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders;

- the distinction between **moral** and **sacred** is related to the distinction between **grace** and the **means of grace**, those signs and sanctification that inculcates grace.

d.] The “Essence” of Consecration:

1.] Divinization: Holiness: this is the transformation of human life into the divine, by a divine communication, with human freedom participating. This is the transformation of human life, its transfiguration, by becoming more and more a life penetrated, elevated to the divine sphere, from within by the varied extension of the divine *agape*. This transformation is realized through **grace**. This is a new “actuation” of the soul by God - a committing of the soul’s faculties to God in Himself to be adored, loved, served. The divine virtues of faith, hope and love become immersed into that absolute circuit of mutual knowledge and love within the Trinity.

2.] Search for a Definition: “consecration” is a complex, paradoxical reality. While it relates to aspects of “separation”, it also has the eminently positive side of being mysteriously filled with the reality that is the Trinity. There is the on-gong classical tension between the “awesome” and the “fascinating”, repelling while attracting¹².

3.] “Holiness” describes God Himself: while God is the “Wholly Other”, is the “Wholly Life” - a bit of Himself is in all of creation, His image and likeness is within human beings. He is Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier - but also **Father, Spouse, Friend**. The basic reason for our own quest for holiness is God Himself: Be holy because God is! [the Law of Holiness, cf. Lv 19:2, etc. etc.] - or, in Lk’s rendition: Be merciful, because God is! [cf. Lk 6:36]. God proportions His awesome holiness to our weak human nature, uniquely in the Incarnation of the Son of God as an Infant, Who grew in age and wisdom [cf. Lk 2:19, 51] leads us *per aspra ad astra, per visibilia ad invisibilia, per crucem ad lucem*.

¹²cf. R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. Oxford Univ. Press 1923, 1950.

4.] The inexorable Law of Gravity upward into the “Christological Constellation”¹³ - when I am raised up, I will draw all to myself [cf. Jn 12:32+]. Jesus in His resurrection as the Great and Merciful High Priest, and He is a firm hope, an anchor cast above to draw us there right through and beyond the veil. [cf. Heb 6:19]. This is the mysterious moving of a creature into God’s orbit. Newton discovered universal gravitation - modern physics has discovered circular movements of electrons around the nucleus of the atom. All of this has provided a beautiful parable of our relationship with God: God is the absolute center of all spiritual attraction and gravitation.

Our hearts indeed are restless until our hearts rest in the Lord, as St. Augustine noted - and only in God is our soul truly at rest [cf. Ps 62] This “law of gravity” is radical, ontological, existential. No one can come to the Lord Jesus unless the Father **draws** him/her [cf. Jn 6:44; 12:32]. Once in orbit, satellites enter into a stage of weightlessness. Sanctity is a repose in God. The ordeals of this life, always concomitant with wanting to serve the Lord [cf. Si 2:1, f.], the crosses of life - do not disturb the depths where the peace of God is found. Sanctification is found in resting in God¹⁴. In His agony, as all through His life, Jesus is a *viator*, in that His body and soul are passable, but is a *comprehensor*, in that in the depths of his soul He is uninterruptedly united to His Father. The hypostatic union is the most irreversible union possible. Christ had hope only as regards those realities He did not yet possess, as the glorification of His body and soul¹⁵. There is nothing to prevent two contrary realities coexisting in the same subject if they are there under different formalities¹⁶. As *viator*, the glory in the depths of His soul did not flow over the lower part of His soul or body, and vice versa, the pain and sorrow of the lower part of the man did not deprive His soul from fruition of God. Jesus is both Son of God as well as Suffering Servant of Yahweh. a man of sorrows.

Being drawn into the Christological orbit is not absorption, nor fusion - the attraction of grace does not depersonalize us but draws the disposed person into a greater personal fulfillment through union with Divine Love. This is the attraction of a mutual encounter, flowing from the very nature of profound love. We are called to absolute Love, that lived within the Trinity. Love involves exchange, self-giving, receiving: the more given, the greater capacity for reception. Materially, as in mortification, the more one gives up, the less one has - but spiritually, that more

¹³cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, “The Real Christ in His Constellation”, in: *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*. Ignatius 1986, Part II, pp. 131-182.

¹⁴cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 7, a. 8, c; q. 8, a. 4 ad 2m; 11, a. 1, ad 2m; q. 15, a. 10; q. 18, a. 5, ad 3m; q. 19, a. 3; a. 3, ad 1; q. 30; a. 2, ad 1m/

¹⁵id, III, q. 7, a. 4 c.

¹⁶ib., III, q. 40, a. 8 ad 1m.

does one become, is. We die to live, lose to win, surrender to conquer - and so many other paradoxes. This gravitational “draw” is intimately identified with the circuminsession/circumincession of the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[III] Reparation

1.] A Spiritual Experience¹⁷

a. Pope Paul in His *Credo for the People of God*¹⁸, stated: “...the Church is therefore holy even though she embraces sinners in her bosom, for she enjoys no other life but the life of grace. If, then, they live her life her members are sanctified. If they withdraw from her the contract the sins and impurities of soul which prevent the radiation of her sanctity. **This is why she suffers and does penance for these offenses**, for she has the power to free her sons from their guilt through the blood of Christ and the Gift of the Holy Spirit...”.¹⁹

b. In other words, in all areas of her extension, the Church of all times, yesterday, today, and that of tomorrow, has understood the need of that spiritual experience known as “reparation.” The doctrinal affirmation of the great Holy Father, Paul VI, is quite interesting. Right in the formulation of the Church; as act of faith, the Pope has placed this formula of reparation. Thus, reparation is not only the call of the believer; it is likewise in the Pope’s view, the vocation of the Church. The “subject of reparation” is the Church, this Body of Christ, of which we are all members. The Church is indeed moved by the Holy Spirit to this perpetual travail of reparation for the sins of her own members, for those who have concealed, rather than revealed, the face of Jesus Christ.

c. In one sense, as the Pope’s statement regards the sins of the baptized members of the Church, these are the direct area of the Church’s reparation - and only in the vague, or more general sense, do we make reparation for the sins of humanity. However, all sin disfigures with a kind of spiritual leprosy the people of God made to His image and likeness. The Church’s spousal heart, burns with love for her Redeemer. Reparation, in the long history of the Church, has often been most intimately associated with those milieus that are most committed to the renewal, betterment of the Church

d. In the Pope’s dramatic words, the Church: suffers”, and is afflicted for the sins of her members: she experiences that sadness that Jesus knew in His life-

¹⁷cf., E, Glotin, SJ, *Le Coeur de Jésus*. Namur: Vie Consacrée 16 1997, pp. 163-171, passim]

¹⁸Pope Paul VI, Creed of the People of God, June 30, 1968, in: *Vatican Council II. More Post-Conciliar Documents*. ed. Flannery. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 1982, pp. 387-396 passim.

¹⁹cf. ib., p. 392.

long confrontation with human sin. Reparation is that deep conviction, in the heart of the Church, that profound experience of the sadness of the Heart of Jesus Himself. This ecclesial reparation is born of the love in the Heart of Jesus Christ. It is a loving compassion, deeply felt need of sharing mercy. The intrinsic nature of reparation has to be that love within the bosom of the Trinity itself, for all eternity inclined toward the redemptive creation of the world. The Jesuits have been invited to open up their hearts and minds to the up-dating of the spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - the Company of Jesus has been invited to “re-inculturate” reparation.

2.] The Historical Figure of Reparation

a. “They will look on the One they have pierced...” [cf. Zc 12:10.14; Jn 19:37] - and all will see Him, even those who have pierced Him... [cf. Rv 1:7]. The mystery of the Heart of Jesus as an object of worship in the Church, is rooted in that prayerful, reflective, contemplative “look” on the Preparation Day, on the part of the eye-witness [cf. Jn 19:31]. The Apostle John was the first to record his sentiments on looking on the pierced Christ: ... *this is the evidence of one who saw it - trustworthy evidence, for he knows he speaks the truth - and he gives it so that you may believe...* [cf. Jn 19:35].

b. This contemplative witness of John is now entrusted to the Church. Her members are invited to commit themselves to exploring the mystery hidden in the bosom of that very real, and yet symbolic wound in the side of the Christ Who had just given His “all”. The well-beloved disciple is the only one to emphasize this aspect of the mystery [cf. Jn 20:20, 25, 27]. This “**contemplative gaze**” has continued in the heart of the Church down through the centuries. It is a treasure and a precious pearl in the words of St. Catherine of Siena, which holds the secrets of the mind and will of almighty God. In this sense, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has a biblical origin.

c. Since this is the most widely accepted biblical basis for the later Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, many classical theologians deduced that therefore, reparation is the vocation of the Church, as it would flow from this prayerful “looking upon” the pierced side of the Redeemer. So, reparation certainly is no stranger to this foundational “look” on the Pierced One- but, it would coincide with such contemplation and would indicate its specific tonality. We are all invited to look on the one that we have pierced [cf. Jn 19:37]. Modern exegesis, as well as the Fathers of old, agree that there is here a certain dazed wonder of the packed Roman crowds before their victim. This is the thought of Zechariah [cf. 12:10] as handed on by John.

d. However, the contemplative sadness that would result would seem to pertain more to believers, taken over by their deep sense of divine compassion and the inspiration to repent. This is what Paul VI meant when he noted in his Creed that the Church “suffers” for the sins of her own, and “does penance” for them. While the mystery of the Heart of Jesus designates the objective content of the contemplative regard of the Church on her Beloved - the subjective response to this on the part of the committed believers of the Church is their reflex dedication to reparation. In the act of knowledge, recognition, the object in some way becomes part of the knowing subject - hence, there is a profound and mysterious unity in the act of Revelation, which is the objective Mystery of the Heart of the Second Person of the Most Blessed trinity - and the personal experience of reparation in the hearts of so many contemplative pondering this mystery.

e. The following four stages of development might be placed in the long history of the Church regarding this bond between the revelation of the open side of Christ - and the reparation on the part and in the hearts, of a number of the outstanding representatives of the heroic holiness of the Church:

1.] Ancient Monasticism: the **contemplative gaze** of the early Church resulted in her being afflicted by the view of the sinfulness of her members - this is a profound sorrow for the loss of salvation for some members in her ranks. There is an anonymous Homily of the 4th century that seems to reflect these sentiments: At times, the monks were plunged into a real heart-break [*penthos*] and affliction for the human race. The response to this would be dedicated, committed prayer for all of humanity. The ancient monks gave themselves over to sadness and tears, because the Holy Spirit of God was infusing into them profound love for all humanity. this is a very early glimpse at “reparation”: this would come down to us as the face of one whose name is long lost to history of some solitary in Egypt, or cenobite of Mesopotamia, whose face would be bathed in tears, which would be paradoxically beatifying. This would be the *katanuxis*, compunction of heart.

2.] 14th Century Italy: a thousand years later, here was already flourishing a religious order, founded on the apostolic way of life, the itinerant Dominicans. St. Catherine of Siena was at the head of brigades of evangelizers. She is the most typical representative of the aspiration of the Middle Ages for the painful, but much needed reform of the Church. This most holy “veiled Dominican” lived in her own flesh and hear the dolor of Holy Mother Church disfigured by the sins of her unworthy ministers. With her, it becomes possible for the very first time, to discern with some precision the matter on which the Christian act of reparation reposes: it is not simply on the sins of non-believers, but the terrible sinfulness of Church people, those who sorrowfully wound the heart of the God of Mercy.

Following the Passion and Death of the Lord, many had rejected the inherent value and challenges of the Redemption, and so many simply effused to live the life of love, demanded by the Cross of God's Mercy. this is the enormous sin of "ingratitude" - for this, very little consolation can be offered.

3.] The Blossoming of the Sacred Heart Devotion: St. Margaret Mary [1647-1690] received the inspiration to ponder the Most Holy Redeemer, particularly in His Eucharistic Presence. She was inspired to develop reparation to make up for the ingratitude of the Chosen People. She deeply felt the plaintive cry of the Prophet Micah: o My People, what have I done to you. In what way have I saddened you? [cf. Mi 6:3]. She pondered much on the fact that Christ had loved us, and had given Himself up totally for us all[cf. Ep 5:25] She wondered in her heart about the depths of the words recorded in Isaiah: tell Me, what more could I have done for you, that I have not done? [cf. Is 5:3]. This is the Heart of the IInd Person of the Blessed trinity that has been so horrendously wounded by this horrible kind of "ingratitude."

4.] Therese of Lisieux, Doctress of the Church: in her note of June 9, 1895 she saw herself as a Victim of Holocaust to the Merciful Love of God. remembering her situation in the last quarter of the 19th century, with apostasy rampant after the French and American revolutions, and the upheavals over Europe - she served as a gift of God. Her central devotion, it seems, was the Holy Face. Her avowed purpose was to "offer consolation to Jesus" - to give pleasure to her Beloved - to slake His thirst for souls: she deeply desired to return Love for love. These expressions would in some way describe the great oblation that she wanted to offer in reparation for the sins of her time.

f. As a summary reflection on this broad sweep of history, we can see that from the recorded tears of anonymous monks of the early centuries, these primary successors to the martyrs, the Church comes across as a Sorrowful Mother, weeping the spiritual loss of her beloved sons and daughters. Then, as the history of the Church progressed, three outstanding women represent the feminine mystique of God and the Church as Mother: St. Catherine of Siena [doctress], St. Margaret Mary [whose central message is truly a "Doctrine of Love"] - and the Little Flower, [also a doctress] closer to our own time. The central sin of Christians is seen to be one of "ingratitude" - what has happened in the heart of the Church to her priests and religious? There is a sublime Christocentrism in the act of reparation - the Christ in us all making an oblation of life for our brothers and sisters. reparation, then, is in the words of St. Augustine, a kind of *redamatio*, a response of love for love.

3.] Jesus is the Prime “Repairer”²⁰

a. The very word presupposes some damage, harm done, or committed, that needs to be addressed because it introduces a disorder into the “economy of harmony”. In a family, for example, one son might commit a very grave fault against its honor, or reputation, and the shame redounds on all its members. It is not rare that the other children of the group would feel the inner pressure to efface the dishonor that has come to parents and siblings. As a sign of “reparation” often enough others will do their utmost to remove this shadow from family life. When the Temple of Jerusalem was profaned, the Israelites offered great ceremonies of reparation [cf. the Lamentations]. In this Gospel of Luke we hear the “great little man”, Zacchaeus, states that if he wrongs another person, then he strives to pay back four-fold [cf. Lk 19:8]. Reparation, then, simply is a profound sentiment inspired by love of justice, right and duty.

b. In the human family, it is similarly necessary to offer reparation for the evil that human beings have committed, and still commit against one another and against their Heavenly Father. There are those who have refused the Love of God, refused to recognize their subjection to God and have preferred those idols built with human hands. A terrible insult and continuous injustice is made against the Creator and Redeemer when so much of modern civilization refuses Him adoration and recognition. This seems to be a fundamental injustice from which flow many others, since contemporary humanity simply refuses to see the enormous modern developments of civilization and science as gifts of God.

c. In one sense, it needs to be said that only Jesus is capable of making reparation for these injustices committed by humanity. He made reparation throughout His entire life, death and resurrection, and through all the movements of His Sacred Heart. Jesus’ reparation was total and superabundant [cf. Rm 5:20]. This has given rise to the question on how it would be possible for human beings, Christians, to offer any kind of “reparation” in the true sense, no matter how sincere it might be. It seems better according to modern theologians to avoid an excessive use of words like “outraged honor...divine wrath... divine vengeance” - or that “Jesus holds back the fury of His Father. “

d. What God expects of His “own” is rather the recognition of His merciful Love, and that this spread more and more in the hearts of human beings. As Mary was fully associated in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, so each Christian is invited to be united to His Passion and Death [cf. Liturgy of September 15th]. Paul’s mysterious passage has a direct application here - that we are all called to make up

²⁰cf. Paul DeMeester, *Redécouvrir le Sacre’ Coeur*. Paris: Mediaspaul Maranatha 37, 1996, pp. 107-117,123-124, passim.

Paris: Mediaspaul Maranatha 37, 1996, pp. 107-

for what is lacking in the sufferings of Jesus Christ [cf. Col 1:24]. This text is fundamental, and provides the basis for all participation in the reparation of Jesus Christ. While this was perfect and total, each believer is invited in the passing generations of the Church to become associated with the oblation of Jesus Christ.

4.] The Offended Heart of Jesus Christ

a. ¶ As a response in love to the Love of Jesus Christ that has never been comprehended, but rather so often outraged, reparation does not have in focus just any kind of “ingratitude”. It specifically aims at that which afflicts God the more sorrowfully, in the times following the carrying out in history of the Paschal Mystery of His Most beloved and only begotten Son. What has happened is the misunderstanding of the redemptive act, and the refusal to acquit the challenge of recognition and acceptance of the Redeemer.

b. Recognition constitutes the eschatological response to the Father for those who may have forgotten their baptismal, religious and priestly consecration. There is a divine “regret”, in the anthropopathic language of the Lord’s tears for His People, addressed now to His Church for the uselessness to which His Precious Blood has been reduced in the lives of many who refuse His loving invitations. reparation, then, has a Christocentric nature. There is need to ponder the great mystery of Gethsemane, and its recorded sweat of blood, of the God Man facing also contemporary apostasy and militant atheism and infidelity on such a grand scale. Such “ingratitude” is directed against the open Heart of Jesus, from whose side flowed the streams of salvation in the Blood and water flowing from Him. There is a kind of shameful solidarity in indifference and rejection.

c. Any human being who has ever experienced unrequited love, that deep sadness over a love that is sincerely offered, might have some idea of how far the suffering of the One Who made Himself man for us. He has given up His body and blood in totality for us all, and so often is so sparsely repaid. Thus, every human being worthy of that name and whose own heart is in the right place, would never give up trying to express his/her recognition for this divine love without measure, this “insane love” of God and to feel the obligation to make up for the cold indifference and the outrages to His Divine Majesty.

d. This is what the long history of the faithful servants and hand maids of God have tried to do. The acts of reparation of so many of the true Friends of God through history consist in their efforts to share in the most intimate manner possible through their own minds and hearts, with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In their reflective gaze on the Pierced One they try to fathom the consciousness of Jesus Christ through His long existence, particularly in Gethsemane The mystery of “reparation” in some way touches the very essence of Christology. This brings

together the enormous mysteries of “suffering in God” and “the human consciousness of Jesus Christ” two challenging questions regarding the God-Man. The act of reparation is the response in love to the redemptive act, and offers some profound reflection on the Christ of Gethsemane, more and more does the believer enter into the question: “Why did God become Man?”. One is gradually over-taken by Paul’s idea: He has loved me, and handed Himself over for me! [cf. Ga 2:20].

5.] Modern Appeals for Reparation

a. For some, reparation might be thought of as the “form of all the virtues”. Reparation may be seen as the “core” of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and is meant to be a loving response, from the very instant through history when the redemptive love of God ran head on into the refusal, or indifference of human beings. Reparation is closely bound to the sublime desire of rebuilding a new world and to those conditions necessary for this to become a reality. In times of hatred, violence, discrimination, favoritism, reparation offered to the loving Heart of the Lord cannot really be authentic if it is not directed toward those who are poor, and to the promotion of authentic justice, the love for that which is smaller, and respect for all life.

b. Pope John Paul II offered his own “magna charta” on the Eucharist in his Letter to all the Bishops of the Church, entitled ***Dominicae Caenae*** [Feb. 24, 1980. In this he states: “... the Eucharist is the principal and central *raison d’être* of the sacrament of the priesthood which effectively came into being at the moment of the institution of the Eucharist and together with it...” [# 2]... our adoration is a response that tries to **repay** that love immolated even to the death on the cross: it is our ‘Eucharist’, our giving Him thanks, our praise of Him for having redeemed us by His death and made us sharers in immortal life through His resurrection... [# 3]... Eucharistic worship is not so much worship of the inaccessible transcendence as worship of the divine condescension, and it is also the merciful and redeeming transformation of the world in the human heart... [# 7]...As bring these considerations to an end, I would like to ask forgiveness - in my own name and in the name of all of you, venerable and dear brothers in the episcopate - for everything which, for whatever reason, through whatever human weakness, impatience or negligence, and also through the at times partial, one-sided and erroneous application of the directives of the IInd Vatican Council, may have caused scandal and disturbance concerning the interpretation of the doctrine and the veneration due to this great sacrament...” [# 12]

6.] Practices of Reparation:

a. **The Holy Hour:** this is a time-honored custom of the Church. In this connection it is helpful to remember some of the documents of the Church regarding “Worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass” in the post-Conciliar period:

- ***Eucharisticum Mysterium***, Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, May 25, 1967²¹;

- ***Eucharistiae Sacramentum***, On Holy Communion and the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside of Mass, June 21, 1973²²;

- ***Dominicae Caenae***, Pope John Paul II’s Letter on the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, February 24, 1980²³;

- ***Inaestimabile Donum***, Instruction on Certain Norms concerning the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery. April 3, 1980²⁴.

b. **Eucharistic Adoration:** the new **Catechism of the Catholic Church** is particularly helpful here²⁵:

1178: The Liturgy of the Hours, which is like an extension of the Eucharistic celebration, does not exclude, but rather in a complementary way calls forth the various devotions of the People of God, especially adoration and worship of the Blessed Sacrament.

1183: The tabernacle is situated in churches in a most worthy place with the greatest honor. The dignity, placing, and security of the Eucharistic tabernacle should foster adoration before the Lord really present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

1378: Worship of the Eucharist: In the Liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting, or bowing deeply, as a sign of adoration of the Lord. The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the

²¹cf. Vatican Collection, Vol. I. Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed. A. Flannery, OP, Boston: St. Paul 1988 revised, pp. 100-136.

²²ib., pp. 242-253.

²³cf. Vatican Collection, Vol. 2, *Vatican Council II. More Post Conciliar Documents.* ed. Flannery, OP. Collegeville: Liturgical 1982, pp 64-92.

²⁴ib., pp. 93-102.

²⁵cf. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*. October 11, 1992.

consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession.

1379: The tabernacle was first intended for the reservation of the Eucharist in a worthy place so that it could be brought to the sick and those absent, outside of Mass. as faith in the real presence of Christ in his Eucharist deepened the Church became conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present in the Eucharistic species. It is for this reason that the tabernacle should be located in an especially worthy place in the Church and should be constructed in such a way that it emphasizes and manifests the truth of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

1380: It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to His Church in this unique way. Since Christ was about to take his departure from His own in His visible form, He wanted to give us His sacramental presence; since He was about to offer Himself on the Cross to save us, He wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which He loved us 'to the end'. even to the giving of His life. In His Eucharistic presence He remains mysteriously in our midst as the One who loved us and gave Himself up for us, and He remains under signs that express and communicate this love.

The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of Love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet Him in adoration, in contemplation, full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease.

2691: The Church, the house of God, is the proper place for the liturgical prayer of the parish community. it is also the privileged place for adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The choice of a favorable place is not a matter of indifference for true prayer...

b. **The Litany of the Sacred Heart:** as is well known, this Litany consists of 33 invocations, symbolizing the number of the years that Christ lived on earth. Like the first three Petitions of the Our Father concern the divinity, and the last four, believers - in similar manner we find the following:

- the first 16 invocations treat of the perfections of the Heart of Jesus Christ in Himself;

- the last 17 invocations, up to # 33 present those gifts and virtues for us and our liberation from sin and the powers of darkness. All of the invocations have a biblical support:

[A] The Perfections of the Heart of Jesus in itself

Son of the Eternal Father [Mt 16:16]

Formed by the Holy Spirit in the Womb of the Virgin Mary [Mt 1:20]

Substantially united to the Word of God [Jn 1:14; Ga 2:9]

Of infinite Majesty [Mt 25:31]

Holy Temple of God [Jn 2:21]

Tabernacle of the Most High [Heb 9:12]

House of God and Gate of Heaven [Gn 28:17; Jn 1:51].

Burning furnace of Charity [Lk 12:49; Ep 2:4]

Sanctuary of Justice and Love [Heb 1:9]

Full of Love and Goodness [Lk 18:19; Tt 3:4]

Wellspring of all virtues [[Rv 22:1; Ph 4:7-9]

Worthy of our Praise [Rv 5:12-14]

King and Center of all Hearts [Heb 2:8]

In Whom are all Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge [Col 2:3]

In Whom dwells the fullness of the Divinity [Col 2:9]

In Whom the Father was well pleased [Mt 17:5]

[B] Gifts and Virtues for Our Liberation

Of Whose fullness we have all received [Jn1:16]

Desire of the Everlasting Hills [Gn 49:26; Jn 12:22]

Patient and Most Merciful [2 Th 3:5]

Enriching all who invoke You [Rm 10:12]

Fountain of Life and Holiness [Is 12:3; Jn 7:37]

Atonement for our Sins [1 Jn 2:2]

Overwhelmed with Insults [Lm 3:30]

Bruised for our Offenses [Is 53:5]

Obedient unto Death [Ph 2:8]

Pierced with a Lance [Is 53:5; Jn 19:34]

Source of all Consolation [2 Co 1:3]

Our Life and Resurrection [Jn 14:6; Jn 11:25]

Our Peace and Reconciliation [Ep 2:16; Col 1:20]

Victim of Sins [1 Jn 2:2; Heb 2:14]

Salvation of those who trust in You [Ac 4:12; Heb 9:28]

Hope of those who die in You [1 Th 4:15; Tt 3:7]

Delight of all saints [Rv 19:7]

7.] A Spirituality of Redemption

a. Ours is a world almost entangled by technological progress - almost choking on moral permissiveness - confused by religious subjectivism. What possible impact could this 'dated' devotion have in today's world - is a question that is often asked. The wealthy world is immersed in its well being - the Third World is struggling to eke out an existence. In the ecclesiastical world some of the more beautiful papal interventions fall on many deaf ears.

b. Yet, the Spirit of the Most High is present in our world inspiring generosity, creative approaches to the human problems of our time. There is a firm appeal of the Holy Father for a New Evangelization, and a great appeal of his message in the hearts of many young people. With a view to making ours a civilization of love rather than letting it slip into one "of death", a reflection on the love of God for these times can be helpful.

[IV] Ecclesial Pardon

Introduction:

[1] Purification of memory is one of the means that may help perpetuate the benefits of the great Jubilee year of 2000. The communal conscience of the Church, and each individual's, also have to be liberated from all forms of resentment and violence, leading to a corresponding recognition of guilt.

[2] The purification of conscience is an act of courage and humility - the Church also kneels before God and begs forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters. There needs to be an unconditional trust in the power of truth and an acceptance of some of the unease that might result. Between agreement and unease, there is always place for quiet and prayerful reflection.

[3] The Church is understood as the community of the baptized, instituted by Christ, on Mission from the Father, being a community inseparably visible and operating in history under the direction of her pastors, united as a profound mystery by the action of the life-giving Spirit. The Church takes upon herself the weight of past faults in order to purify her memory and to live the renewal of heart and life in accord with the will of God.

[4] The purpose of all purification of memory is always the greater glory of God. The confession of sin is sustained and illuminated by faith in the truth which frees and saves - confession is always an act of hope, offered in unbridled trust in the mercy of God - and is an act of love offered by the sinner to the Most Blessed Trinity. Confession is addressed to God, the compassionate Father for all sins of life, that all might be reconciled to Him by Jesus Christ, the only savior of the World, and in the Holy Spirit the Bond of Unity in the Trinity.

Problems:

[1] There are those who would be in full agreement with the Church asking pardon, as this is a sign of the Church's vitality and authenticity, and thus this would strengthen her credibility. This also helps the Church to contribute to changing and unacceptable images of herself, especially in those areas where the Church appears to some as involved in obscurantism and intolerance. This practice of making an appeal for ecclesial forgiveness is not simply an exercise in rhetoric.

[2] Some of the faithful are disconcerted by this action - how would it be possible to hand on love for the Church to succeeding generations when the Church admits her past sins and crimes. For some there is the fear that this action will be exploited by the Church's detractors. Then, there is no need for the current generation of believers to hold themselves responsible for the short-comings of the past to which they did not consent. While today we might still feel the effects of all this, we also need to be taught by the past: those who do not heed the mistakes of the past may be condemned to repeating them! [as the old saying goes].

[3] There may be a proliferation of groups seeking pardon from the Church - either by analogy with other groups, or because they have become convinced that they have suffered wrongs. The Church needs to continue proclaiming the truth revealed by God, entrusted to her in the area of faith or morals - no matter whom, or what groups, this vocation of hers, may be offended. With the Crusades and the Inquisition, while these are often considered as wrongs, they certainly cannot be judged by the much more highly developed conscience of today. Some ethical judgments, however, are always possible since the truth of God on which moral requirements are based always have value.

[4] Despite the many good examples of saints and beautiful doctrines, the Church still sins. The good grain becomes inextricably mixed in with the chaff of infidelity and sin. It is always necessary, too, to distinguish between Church-people who do sin, and the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church. The requests for pardon by the Pope have also inspired emulation on the part of some world leaders; for some, their loyalty to the Church has been shaken by this gesture. For the most

part, however, most have seemed to see in this gesture the sincerity of the Pope and the healthy penance service that he celebrated in behalf of the whole Church.

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1.] Biblical Approach

a.] The OT

a. Confessions of sin and requests for forgiveness abound throughout the Scriptures, in the historical, prophetic and wisdom writings. These might be classified in two general headings: confession of individual sins; and those of the entire people. Due to the recent Church's request for pardon of great interest to us is also the request for pardon on the part of the whole people. The awareness of personal responsibility only matured gradually as in these texts: Ezk 14:12-33; 18:1-32; 33:10-20.

b. The desert generation sinned by not going forward to the promised land [cf. Dt 1:41] - Moses' generation had sinned in speaking against God and the Guide He had appointed for them [cf. Nb 21:7] - the people had "sinned" worshipping false gods [cf. Jgs 10:10-12] - the people in Samuel's time had also sinned [cf. 1 S 7:6] - the people of Ezra's time had sinned in their mixed marriages, so harmful for their faith [cf. Ezr 10:13] - some of the individual lamentations for sin are in the first, collective person [cf. Ps 65:2, f.; 90:8; 103:10; 107:10, f., 17; Is 59:9-15; 64:5-9; Jr 8:14; Lm 1:14, ff.] - Zion speak of her sins leading to her own destruction [cf. Ezk 33:10; Mi 7:9, 18, f.]

c. There are texts presented from the lips of religious leaders asking pardon for the current sins of the People - this would be the role of the Mediator, interceding for his people: even the Pharaoh is recorded asking pardon [cf. Ex 9:27]; Moses prays for the sins of all [cf. Ex 34:9]; the high priest confesses the sins of the People [cf. Lv 16:21] - prayers for atonement [cf. Ex 32:11-13; Dt 9:26-29]. Nehemiah confesses the sins of his people [cf. Ne 1:5-11]; the Jewish martyrs believe sin has come from the sins of the people [cf. 2 M 7:18-32].

d. Still another group of texts presents the people or one of their leaders mentioning the sins of those gone before - while not neglecting the sins of the present generation [cf. 2 K 22:13; 2 Ch 34:21] - the Psalmist prays for the sins following the Exodus [cf. Ps 78:8, ff.]; earlier sins have later effects [cf. Jr 31:29; Ezk 18:2]. Most common are the confessions of this nature: the exiles are called to confess their iniquity [cf. Lv 26:40]; Ezra's great penitential prayer is a classic [cf. Ezr 9:5-15]; Tobit prays for his own sins and those of his fathers [cf. Tb 3:1-5]; the Lamentations were composed for this very purpose [cf. Lm 5:7, ff.]. In Daniel there is frequently such prayer, as that of Azariah [cf. Dn 3:26, ff.; 9:4-19].

1.] These prayers are addressed solely to God - these are prayers by the people and for the people for sins against God and against other human beings. It is this sense of corporate personality that weighed heavily on some of the later generations that moved them to beg forgiveness.

2.] Yet, acts of violence perpetrated against other peoples are often understood as having been directed by God, as the exterminations, the carrying out of the “Ban” of defeated peoples were actions of terrifying cruelty [cf. Gn 2:11; Dt 7:2; 1 S 15]. Israel of old admitted that they had sinned by departing from God, and had done every kind of evil. [cf. Dn 3:26, 29, f.; Ba 2:11-13]

b.] The NT

a. There is great emphasis on the holiness of God - the God of Jesus Christ is involved “Holy Father” [cf. Jn 4:22; 17:11], the “Holy One” [cf. 1 Jn 2:20; Ac 6:10]. The Trisagion [cf. Is 6:3] returns to 1 P 1:6, insisting on the fact that Christians need to be holy simply because God is [cf. Lv 11:44, f.; 19:2]. This is simply the OT notion of the Holiness of God - but, for Christians, Jesus has entered on the scene - He, too is “holly” in unique manner, with the Father [cf. Mk 1:24; Lk 1:35; 4:34; Jn 6:69; Ac 3:14; Rv 3:7] - those who follow Him may share this [cf. Jn 17:16-19] - and true filiation in Jesus Christ will always call for kindness to one’s universal neighbor [cf. Mk 12:29-31; Mt 22:37, f.; Lk 10 27-28].

b. Love of neighbor is absolutely central to the teaching of Jesus - this is the New Commandment to love as He is loved by the Father, and as He has loved humanity [cf. Jn 13:34, f. 15:12, 17]. The challenge to forgive is put in this key, that transcends all human standard of justice and produces a reciprocity between human beings, reflecting the *perichoresis* of the Trinity [cf. the Our Father]. Jn 13:34, f.; 15:1-11; 17:21-26]. Great emphasis is given to reconciliation, forgiveness - of one another, as the Father forgives us - and now He will forgive us to the extent we forgive one another [cf. the Our Father].

c. Jesus requires this of discipleship: be ready to forgive all offenses [cf. Mt 6:12-15] - this capacity to forgive shows that one has understood his/her own need for divine forgiveness. The requirement is ‘70 x 7’ [cf. Mt 18:21, f.]. The injured person is invited to take the first step, offering forgiveness from the heart [cf. Mt 18:35; Mk 11:25]. All are sinners before God, Who never refuses pardon when He is entreated. What matters is to change one’s heart and showing in an appropriate way that one really wants reconciliation.

d. Sin wounds one’s relationship with God and neighbor [cf. Lk 15:21] - only God is always merciful and always ready to cancel our sins. This is the ultimate meaning of Christ’s sacrifice - He has purified us from sin [cf. Heb 9:22; 10:18]. The offender and the offended are reconciled by God.

e. For Paul, we are already the “new creation” [cf. 2 Co 5:17; Ga 6:15] - this experience is made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus [cf. Rm 3:21-26; 5:6-11; 8:1-11; 1 Co 15:54-57]. A central theme in this scenario is that grace simply superabounds wherever sin may be found [cf. m 5:12-21] - the believer can rely on the death and resurrection of the Lord for this new life [cf. Rm 6:1-11; Ga 3:27-28; Col 3:10; 2 Co 5:14-15]. Even after the Resurrection and being Baptized into it, believers suffer from their own remaining sinfulness. The frailties of Jesus’ disciples are a dominant theme throughout [cf. Mk 4:40, f.; 6:36, f.; 8:14-21, 31-33; 9:5, f.; 6:32-41; 10:32-45; 14:10-11, 17-21,50; 16:8]. Judas and Peter, the traitor and the betrayer, were part of the “inner circle” - the former ends in desperation [cf. Ac 1:15, ff.] while the other repents [cf. Jn 21:15-19]. Even after the resurrection, some “still doubted” [cf. Mt 28:17].

f. This constant picture of wavering disciples, prone to sin and fail, is not any later “re-read” of church history - this is the way they were! The NT is full of exhortations to behave well in all walks of life, to be more dedicated, avoid evil [cf. Jas 1:5-8, 19-21; 2:1-7; 4:1-10; 1 P 1:13-25; 2 P 2:1-122; Jude 3:13; 1 J 5:10; 2:1-11]. Surprisingly there is no explicit call to confess their sins - with all the admission of sin among the people It is a central part of the Lord’s prayer: Forgive us AS we forgive! [cf. Lk 11:4; Mt 6:12].

2.] The Biblical Jubilee: this is based in Lv 25 - in the “olden days” when there were poor tribes, clans and families the situations of conflict were multiplied. A system of “redemption” had to be set up, more like “frontier justice”, at times. Lv 25 wanted to overcome this rather vague earlier legislation. Every 50 years, there should be a “Jubilee” - with the regular repetition of Israel’s basic profession of faith: the Lord God has rescued this People from slavery. The Jubilee was an implicit admission of fault. The liberation of sufferers and victims was central to this celebration. The Suffering Servant Canticles develop these ideals in a very personal manner, predicting the coming of a Man of Sorrows. Ritual Observance is not enough [cf. Is 58; Ps 40]. Jesus presents His own life, and ministry, quoting Is 58 [cf. Lk 4:17-21].

Summary: the Jubilee Year has been marked with the Church’s admission of her guilt - the appeal is that all strive to re-establish the order of God’s original plan for creation. This singular experience of grace prompts the People of God to establish greater cognizance of the mandate received from God for all to be ever ready to forgive those who have sinned against us.

3.] The Problem

a.] Before Vatican II in the past, decrees and sanctions would punish clerics or lay people for offenses but the Church never asked public pardon before A number of high ranking clerics in the past did ask pardon for their own sins.

It was with Paul VI, however, in his address for the opening of Vatican II that the Pope asked pardon of God and of the separated brethren of the East who may have felt being offended by us.

b.] Vatican II: the official Church asked pardon for those we have offended, and deplores certain attitude found among us. In the genesis of atheism, we Christians sometimes are the reason [cf. GS 19; 36; UR 7. There is in the Church the indefectible fidelity and her weakness among her members, yesterday as well as today {NA 2}. The Church is always to be purified, called to perpetual conversion [GS 43 § 6]. For the first Holy Year after the Council [in 1975] Pope Paul VI chose as its theme: Penance and Reconciliation" [cf. *Paterna cum Benevolentia*, Dec. 8, 1974]. This conversion is needed first of all among Catholics.

c.] John Paul II spoke often of the "sorrowful memories" that mark the divisions in the Christian world. The Church needs to be more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her own children. The responsibility of Christians for the evils of our own time cannot be discounted. In his Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* [Dec. 2, 1984] he also spoke of "social sins", evident in the human community. On Sunday, March 12, 2000, the Pope exercised his prerogative as Universal Shepherd in asking all pardon for the Church's sins. Let us forgive, he appealed, and ask for forgiveness. The infidelities to the Gospel are committed by some of our own brothers and sisters. There is real responsibility among Christians for the evils of today. The acceptance of God's forgiveness leads us all to the commitment to forgive our brothers and sisters and to be reconciled with them.

4.] Theology

a.] The Mystery of the Church: there is a fundamental analogy we can apply here: that of the Incarnation. However, there is also a fundamental difference: Christ was holy and undefiled, and knew no sin [cf. Heb 2:17; 2 Co 5:21] - the Church, though, embraces sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of purification, incessantly pursuing the path of penance and renewal [UR 3; 6]. Each member, in some way, shares in the weakness of the other - all are sinners [cf. 1 Jn 1:8-10]. The Church in her mystery is the encounter of sanctity and of weakness, continually redeemed, and always in need of the power of redemption. Do not look upon our sins, but upon the faith of Your Church - is the prayer of the Eucharistic Canon.

b.] The Holiness of the Church: the Church is holy in the sanctification of Christ - she is maintained in the Holiness of the Spirit, she is indefectibly holy [LG 39]. The Church has been loved by Christ, as His bride and for her He has given Himself up as a loving sacrifice [cf. Ep 5:25]. The members of the Church, therefore, are called rightfully "saints" [cf. Ac 9:13; 1 Co 6:1; 16:1]. The holiness of the Church is founded on the eternal missions of the Son and the Spirit,

guaranteeing the continuity of the mission of the People of God. The holiness **in** the Church depends on personal holiness of its members. The baptized is called to become that which he/she is already by consecration into the Trinity. The Saints are like light kindled by the Lord in the midst of His Church in order to illuminate her - they are a prophecy for the whole world.

c.] *Ecclesia semper purificanda est:* the Church is marked with true holiness, and yet is imperfect. The fullness of holiness belongs to eschatological time - the Church will be without spot and wrinkle only in her everlasting homeland, and not on her way of pilgrimage²⁶. The Church prays several times each day: "forgive us our trespasses - our petition begins with a 'confession' of our wretchedness"²⁷. Let us never allow our falls to be wounds for the Church. [cf. also LG 11]. The Church is holy through her incorporation into Christ - but, she never tires of doing penance.

d.] The Church as Mother: there is a great solidarity existing through all time and space because of our incorporation into Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, expressed in the idea of "Mother Church." The Church becomes a mother by means of the word of God faithfully received, and through preaching and baptism she brings forth children to a new and immortal life. The Church is like Mary - she gives birth as a virgin. The Church is continually realized in the exchange and communication of the Spirit from one believer to another. Even the mortal sinner can always come back to the springs of grace and remove the burden of sin. Holiness and sin in the Church are reflected in their effects on the entire Church. The Church is a sorrowful mother, not only because of the persecutions coming from the outside - but above all, because of the betrayals, failures, delays and sinfulness of her children. The influence of evil, however, will never be able to conquer the force of grace and the radiance of good, even the most hidden good! The Church, also through the Jubilee, should become more conscious of the sinfulness of her children, and recognize the necessity of making amends for the sins of the past, earnestly seeking God's forgiveness.

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²⁶St. Thomas Aquina, III, q. 8, a. 3, ad 2um.

²⁷cf. CCC # 2839

CONCLUSION

The “New Evangelization”

[1] For some time now, Pope John Paul II has launched the idea of a “New Evangelization in the New Millennium”. This is in the minds of many an inspiration from the Holy Spirit for our modern world. There is the appeal to go back to the “Gospel of the Spirit”, the Acts of the Apostles - for the creative fidelity and faithful creativity to the teaching of the Apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to prayer [cf. Ac 2:42, ff.]. The “battle cry” in this Spiritual Combat is: God loves you! The Son of God has come for you! The Holy Spirit dwells within you for the asking! This is the first conviction.

[2] The center-piece here is that Jesus Christ has come for us all - He has come to seek us out, and to unite us to His own Filiation, within the life of the Most Blessed Trinity. Jesus Christ wants to be united in a personal way with every human being [cf. GS 22] - He wishes to establish and develop an ever deeper communion of life. Union with God is life eternal with “God with us” - this is what He wants of us, for each one of us to be with Him. The heart of the New Evangelization

[3] In saving us, the Lord Jesus puts us right now into communion with the Most Blessed Trinity. The Lord has promised this communication - not only for eternal life later on - but for our victories over sin and death, the conquering of all our fears. He promises us a share in His resurrection as friendship with Him forever. We will see Him as He Is. Without hope, human beings are gravely mutilated and turn to other more immediate rewards. In speaking of eternal life, we do not neglect this one. The hope and the certitude of living eternal life with God in no way diminish the commitment to our earthly tasks, but can even make us more dedicated to them. It is the way we are consecrated to these that determines the level of eternity.

[4] It is not enough to speak of equality, peace, fraternity and other beautiful ideals - these must all be seen in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our peace, our brother, and He it is that helps us to intensify the image and likeness of God within us. He alone is our Gospel of Life, our Splendor of Truth, as the Holy Spirit is our Lord and Vivified - as the Father is Rich in Mercy. The great style of the New Evangelization is dialogue, conversation in friendship with all who may respond to our effort.

[5] The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus seems ready made for the Apostolic Mission of the New Evangelization. It begins right wherever we are. The ‘neighbor’ is **anyone** we meet. For the New Evangelization today it is necessary that the loving Heart of Jesus become recognized as the heart of the Church: He it is Who calls us to conversion, to reconciliation. It is He who unfolds for us the pathway of the Beatitudes, for the pure of heart to be ever more inflamed with the justice of God. It is He Who will bring about that warm and loving communion of the members

of the Body of the Lord. It is He who helps us to adhere to the Good News, and to be open to the promises of eternal life. Being heart to heart with Jesus Christ opens the human heart to the dimensions of the whole world [John Paul II, Homily for the Canonization of Claude de la Colombiere, May 31, 1992.]

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The End!

[for now!]

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