

The Sacred Heart of Jesus

Meditations for the Month of June



Jesus meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto Thine.

June 1st

The Claims of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

*T*he Sacred Heart of Jesus calls for our devotion more than all other symbols of His Love. It is not only the symbol of His love; it is the very source of that love. It is itself an unfathomable ocean of love which can never be exhausted. When the spear had drawn forth from it the mingled blood and water, there still remained the love with which it loved us, and will love us to the end. From the first moment of the Incarnation to all eternity it has loved us and will love us with an unceasing love.

*T*he Sacred Heart of Jesus, though a true human heart, is nevertheless, at the same time, the Heart of God. As such it calls for that supreme homage that is due to God alone. This is true of every part of our Lord's Body, and of His Heart, if it were possible, even more than of the rest, inasmuch as it is the organ of that love which is the central attribute of God. To the Sacred Heart of Jesus I will cry: "My God and my Lord! Behold how He loved me!"

*I*t has been sometimes said that our Lord died of a broken heart, and in one sense it is true; such a love as His burst through all the bonds of flesh. It was the yearning love of His Heart over sinners, and the anguish at the thought of how many would reject that love, which caused Him to shed His Heart's Blood for those whom He thus loved. St. Francis used to say: "My Love was crucified!" and in imitation of him we will say: "My Love had His Heart pierced with love of me."

June 2nd

The Love of the Sacred Heart for Man

*T*he world has never witnessed such love as the love of the Sacred Heart for fallen man. The tenderest, fondest earthly love fades away and becomes as nothing in comparison with the love of Jesus. It combines in itself the love of the most devoted friend, of the most affectionate brother, of the lover for his beloved, of the mother for her darling son. Every form of love is united in the yearning love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

*T*here never was a love so patient, so much-enduring, as the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It waits uncomplainingly until we choose to return our feeble love for all its love to us. It puts up with neglect, coldness, nay, even outrage and insult. Any earthly friend or lover, nay, even the fond mother, would long ago have been repelled by such treatment as He receives from ungrateful man. But not so Jesus. "Can a woman forget her infant," He asks, "so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? Even if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee."

*T*he love of Jesus is a love which shows itself in deeds. He delights to pour out the treasures of His mercy on men, even on the ungrateful and on His enemies, and how much more on those who return Him love for love? For them there is no end to His gifts of love. Every day, every hour, some fresh favor and benefit, and all these only preliminary to the eternal reward He has prepared for them in Heaven. How generous He has been to me, and what have I been in return?

June 3rd

The Characteristics of the Love of the Sacred Heart

How does the love of the Sacred Heart differ from the love God bears us? Does it add anything to the Divine Love entertained for us by our Father in Heaven? Yes, it has certain characteristics impossible to the uncreated nature of the Infinite God.

It is a human love. It is the Heart of One who is really and truly man. Hence the love of His Heart is that of a heart that beats with pulsations like ours. It has all that belongs to human love raised to an almost impossible intensity by reason of the Divinity to which it is joined. What confidence ought we to have in Christ, our Brother, whose love for us is human as well as Divine!

It is a sensible love. Just as we see through our eyes, and hear through our ears, so we love through our hearts. The heart is the organ of love. It feels affection and is physically influenced by it. It has strong emotions, and now rejoices, now sorrows. He is touched with the feelings of our poor infirmities. Human joy and sorrow thrilled through His Sacred Heart while He was on earth. His Heart still rejoices over His children, and still mystically sorrows for their sins.

It is a love of sympathy. The Sacred Heart has itself experienced all that we suffer. Each misery has its echo there. Jesus not only understands all our troubles, but each has been felt by Him in His own person. What a relief to have One who always has for us unlimited sympathy!

June 4th

The Sacred Heart formed in Mary's Womb

*T*ime was when there was no Heart of Jesus burning with love for men. God loved men, pitied them, perfectly understood human treachery and human misery, but not from personal experience of it. Before Jesus came, mankind was hurrying down to Hell. Reflect on the hopeless condition of the heathen world, and thank God from your heart that you did not live then. Would you not have been among the worst?

*B*ut God had long looked down with pity on the earth's darkness. The Word was made Flesh, and in taking to Himself flesh He necessarily took a human heart, glowing with love for every child of Adam, sorrowing with their sorrows, moved by their distress, rejoicing in their happiness, craving for their love, wounded by their unkindness. It was from the first moment of the Incarnation, when Mary conceived of the Holy Ghost, that the Sacred Heart of Jesus first began to throb with unspeakable love for fallen man.

*I*n that first instant of its existence the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in virtue of the Divine personality to which it was inseparably united, embraced in its Divine compassion all the sorrows of men as long as the world should last. My troubles and sorrows were not overlooked. From that time until the end, the Sacred Heart has been sympathizing, and will continue to sympathize, with all that gives me joy or sorrow. O wondrous love of God made man!

June 5th

The First Adorers of the Sacred Heart

When the Angel's message came to Mary, and she had accepted the Divine decree, she became conscious of the presence in her womb of the Incarnate God, in whose Sacred Heart was centered His love for fallen man. What was her prevailing sentiment in contemplating this mystery of Divine compassion? We know it from her own words. She desired that her heart should humbly cooperate with the Sacred Heart of Jesus that she, in the lowly capacity of His handmaid, should be allowed to take her share in the work He had come to do.

There was another present who joined with Mary in her submission, in her gladness, in the union of her will with God's. Gabriel, before he departed from her, humbly adored his Incarnate God, doing reverence to that Sacred Heart of Jesus, and rejoicing in the Divine decree that was to be the means of filling up the places in Heaven of those who had fallen from their high estate.

A few days passed, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus received from another the testimony of his recognition and his joy. St. John Baptist manifested his love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The unborn infant in Elizabeth's womb leaped with delight within his mother's womb, and received from the Sacred Heart the gift of being freed from the stain of sin and clad in the robe of justice. To me, too, the Sacred Heart offers the same happiness, if only I choose to avail myself of it.

June 6th

The Earliest Pulsations of the Sacred Heart

What was the first thought that flashed through the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Naught else than an act of complete and absolute submission to the holy will of God: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God," and a joy in the prospect of living for no other end than this: "I am content to do it, yea. Thy law is within my heart." Here is the foundation of all holiness--perfect conformity to the Divine will. Yet how rare it is! How sadly wanting in my sinful heart!

What was the second thought following close on this, and, in a manner, one with it? It was an acceptance of the special work God had sent Him to do. God sent His Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved. He received with Joy the task of the world's redemption, though He knew full well all it would cost Him. I shall never tread in the footsteps of Jesus until I learn by the sacrifice of myself to imitate His Sacred Heart.

The will of God thus recognized, the Sacred Heart conceived at once an intense love for each and all of those whom He had come to redeem. They were entrusted to Him by His Eternal Father, they were His brethren, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, and His Heart went out towards them with the yearning of an intense affection. He yearned for the happiness and salvation of each with a Divine longing. He yearned then and yearns now for my happiness. Courage, then, faint heart, and think of the love of the Heart of Jesus for thee!

June 7th

The Sacred Heart at Bethlehem

Mary, when about to bring forth her first- born Son, could find no shelter at Bethlehem, and had to take refuge in the cave which served as a stable for the oxen. Meanwhile, the Sacred Heart of Jesus was experiencing, even before His birth, the sort of treatment that He was to receive all His life long. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." It is the same now: He begs for admittance now as then. Mary and Joseph are still His faithful companions; but Jesus, Mary, and Joseph still ask in vain for admittance. O my Jesus! Have I ever refused to open when Thou hast called by the secret whisper of Thy grace?

While the Sacred Heart of Jesus is grieved by the discourtesy of the inhabitants of Bethlehem, He is grieved, too, by the thought of the misery which is to come upon them when Herod murders all the children in Bethlehem and the country around, and He destines for them a rich reward. So now He grieves with every bereaved mother, with every suffering child, and delights to carry the little ones in His arms to Heaven.

In the stable Christ is born, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus becomes the centre of worship for the faithful souls who gather round the manger. The shepherds come to adore the new-born Infant. His Heart rejoices in their simplicity. The Magi come from afar with their triple offerings, and He blesses them and raises them to a higher than earthly royalty. Above all, Joseph and Mary kneel before their Son and their God. His Heart basks in their burning love. I will fancy myself kneeling there and offering myself to Jesus.

June 8th

The Sacred Heart at Nazareth

*L*ook into the little cottage at Nazareth, and behold the fairest of all the children of men nestling on His Holy Mother's breast. How those two Hearts beat in perfect unison! Mary's Immaculate Heart receiving from the Heart of Jesus a stream of grace that flowed on continually without obstacles. Jesus, in turn, rejoicing with unspeakable joy at the only heart that satisfied His longings and fulfilled His hopes. O that my heart were, in this, more like Mary's!

*L*ook at the humble workshop attached to the cottage at Nazareth, and see Jesus in His early youth working under Joseph's direction. He is just at the age when boys begin to assert their liberty and independence; and who had more right to liberty and independence than the King of Heaven and earth? Yet Jesus is subject to Joseph with blind obedience. His Heart is in love with subjection; it is a joy to the Creator to obey one of His creatures. Shall we not love subjection after such an example?

*L*ook once again at Jesus amid the children of His own age. Sometimes He is talking to them, and they listen, spellbound, to the words of the carpenter's Son. Sometimes He is taking the lead in their innocent games. But most often He is consoling them in trouble, encouraging the downhearted. He is always thinking of others, ministering to others, making others happy. How unselfish, even in childhood! How kind, how thoughtful! O that I were more like Him in this!

June 9th

The Sacred Heart during the Public Life

In the Public Ministry of our Lord the wonderful attractiveness of the Sacred Heart cannot fail to strike even the surface reader of the Gospels. He drew all men to Him and made them forget all else. A crowd of seven thousand followed Him into the desert, and preferred to faint with hunger rather than leave Him. A woman, who was a sinner, braved the taunts and jeers of the guests at a banquet to throw herself at His Feet. For those who have good will, Jesus has the same attractiveness now. I may test my good will by seeing whether I am drawn to Him.

What was the secret of this attractiveness? It was not His Divine beauty, or His eloquence, or His majesty of mien. It was His overflowing, unbounded love, manifesting itself in every word. All men of good will who listened to Him could not help saying, "He loves me fondly, tenderly, and the one desire of His Heart is to lead me to better things, to save me from my miseries." It is just the same now. His Sacred Heart still yearns over me, and desires to raise me to better things.

Yet He was not attractive to all. Some He repelled, they were ill at ease in His presence and longed to get rid of Him. They had a positive aversion for Him and were afraid of Him. Who were these? They were the men of bad will; the self-sufficient, the self-willed, the lovers of sin. There is nothing that so destroys the attractiveness of Jesus as any sin loved and indulged. Is there any such in me?

June 10th

The Sacred Heart among the Apostles

*I*f our Blessed Lord poured forth the treasures of His Sacred Heart upon all among whom He dwelt, His twelve Apostles received a share corresponding to the place of privilege that they occupied. In the prayer He offered to His Eternal Father before His Passion they occupy a special place: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, for Thou hast given them Me; that they may be one even as We are one." The Sacred Heart yearned over them. I, too, am bound to Christ by the wonderful graces He has given me. He means me, too, in my sphere to be an Apostle of His Sacred Heart. What a happiness for me, and what a claim on His love!

*W*e observe, too, our Lord's exceeding patience with the Apostles. They were selfish, narrow, perverse, incredulous. Yet how He forbore with them! With what unspeakable gentleness He put up with all their faults! Never a harsh word or angry look. I must try and copy the Sacred Heart in this, when others try my temper by their perverseness or their dullness. I must be gentle with them for Jesus' sake.

*T*he Apostles enjoyed the inestimable privilege of being for three years the constant companions of Jesus. Yet at the Last Supper He speaks as if He were indebted to them for their society: "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations, and I dispose to you, as My Father disposed to me, a Kingdom." So Christ our Lord will one day thank us for our poor services, and treat us as if He were indebted to us. Christ my debtor for His love to me! Yet it is a fact of the Divine love.

June 11th

The Dignity of the Sacred Heart

*T*he Sacred Heart of Jesus, though a true human heart, is yet not the heart of any human person. His human nature subsists in His Divine personality. Hence His Sacred Heart has the dignity which belongs, in virtue of His Divine nature, to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It is, so to speak, absorbed in the glory of the Divinity, though without losing its character of a true human heart; just as a piece of iron does not cease to be iron because it glows with the heat of the fire into which it is plunged. Rejoice in the glory of the Sacred Heart, and adore the Divinity which dwells there.

*T*he Sacred Heart is also bound up in the closest union with the Divine nature of Jesus Christ. It is endowed with Divine qualities which flow into it from the God-head. It has authority without limit over the hearts of men. They are all its subjects, whom it has the right to command. It loves men as God only can love them. It loves God as only those can love Him who see Him face to face.

*I*n the Sacred Heart of Jesus are centered all the supernatural powers which the nature of man is capable of possessing. What is there that it cannot effect? It has in itself the power of working miracles. It shares the Divine prerogative of unbounded mercy. As from the sun flow light and heat, so from the Heart of Jesus flow all possible supernatural graces. What then may not I expect from its Divine generosity?

June 12th

The Sanctity of the Sacred Heart

*T*he sanctity of the Sacred Heart is the sanctity of One who is God as well as man. The Sacred Heart of Jesus hates sin as God hates it, loathes it with inexpressible loathing. How, then, can I, who am so full of sin, venture to appeal to the Heart to which sin is thus foul with a foulness that knows no bound or limit? At least I can pray that I may share in a greater degree this hatred of sin, and so learn to avoid it.

*H*appily for us, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by reason of the Divine nature of our Lord, has also unbounded love for sinners. His infinite sanctity makes Him long after them with an inexhaustible love, and an unceasing desire to see them rid of the sin that denies them. If sins still cling to me, it is not His fault, but my own. It is owing to my want of correspondence to His constant invitations to come to Him to be healed of all sin.

*T*here is also communicated to the Sacred Heart a boundless store of created graces of the same kind as those bestowed on us, but immeasurably higher in degree. In this store is contained the grace necessary for every need, and among them the special graces which I need, and which are there ready to flow into my soul if I put no hindrance in the way. They pour into His Heart like a mighty river, from whence there flow to us such rivulets of grace as we are capable of receiving.

June 13th

The Compassion of the Sacred Heart

Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer with us as well as for us. Every sort of suffering has a claim on His Divine compassion.

He has the most intense compassion for those who are suffering any earthly sorrow. None appreciates as *He* the utter loneliness of the mother who has lost her son; of the friend who is separated from one who was dear as life itself. At the tomb of Lazarus and at the gates of Nairn *He* manifested His tender sympathy with sorrow. To *Him* then we will have recourse when earthly shadows press hard upon us.

He has a still greater compassion for those who have separated themselves from God by sin, and who are desirous to be freed from the chain that has bound them down, and to return to their Father in Heaven. What countless, boundless graces flow from His Sacred Heart to help them in their difficulties! What sweetness thence proceeds to fill the heart of the sinner who does penance!

He has the greatest compassion of all for His servants and saints who are suffering for *Him*. How it grieves *Him* to witness their pains! What consolations *He* pours into their souls! How *He* compensates them for their afflictions with spiritual delights! What a reward *He* promises *Himself* to give them for what they have endured for love of *Him*! It is indeed of all privileges the greatest to earn the sympathy of the Sacred Heart by suffering for the cause of Christ.

June 14th

The Chief Desires of the Sacred Heart

While our Lord was upon earth, He several times expressed to His Apostles what He had most at heart, and what was the work He had chiefly come to perform. He told them that He had come to send fire on the earth, and asked them what else they could expect Him to desire except that that fire should speedily be enkindled (St. Luke xii. 49). Yes, Jesus came to kindle on earth the fire of Divine Love. Does this fire burn brightly in my heart, and do I fulfil His longing that it should be kindled more and more in me?

This fire was not merely the fire of love to God; it was also the fire of mutual charity amongst men. When Christ came, hatred, jealousy, selfishness, strife were the order of the day. He came to spread charity, self-sacrifice, peace, mutual good-will. Yet how faintly this flame burns in my cold heart! How much of selfishness and ill-feeling and petty jealousy still remains there!

This fire of love to God and man gives birth to another fire, which also consumes the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and burns in the hearts of all who love Him; the fire of zeal for souls and a desire to labor and suffer for them. How this fire burned in the hearts of the saints--of St. Paul, St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Alphonsus Liguori! How eager they were to bring others to God! How unselfish in their exertions in their behalf! I must pray for more of that true zeal that animated the saints of God.

June 15th

The Excellence of the Sacred Heart

The Sacred Heart of Jesus was the instrument of a human soul, which contained in it all the perfections, natural and supernatural, of which the human soul is capable. It was the ideal of which the soul, even of the greatest of the saints, was but an utterly inadequate realization. Its sweetness, its gentleness, its power to attract, its Divine beauty were unbounded and almost infinite. Let us contemplate that Sacred Heart, radiant with glory and splendor, and adore it with grateful love.

*T*he Sacred Heart received all these perfections in order to dispense them to others. It overflows with graces; they proceed from it in copious streams to all who are willing to receive them. What beauty they impart to the soul that drinks in the stream of grace from that Heart! Every perfection of the Heart of Jesus is communicated to it in some degree, and renders it so beautiful that it is an object of admiration to God Himself.

*T*hrough the heart of man continually flows the blood that circulates throughout his body. Hence the Precious Blood of Jesus flowed continually through His Sacred Heart. We cannot wonder, then, that in that Blood unbounded virtue is contained. It derives its efficacy from the Heart of Jesus. One drop is enough to cleanse the greatest sin, nay, the sins of the whole world. In that Heart there is the same virtue, and I, a sinner, can take refuge there, knowing that I shall be healed.

June 16th

The Sacred Heart among Sinners

*O*ne of the things at which the Pharisees took scandal during Our Lord's Sacred Ministry was His association with publicans and sinners. They taunted Him with His friendship for sinners. They asked His disciples why He ate and drank with them, talked to them words of gentleness and sympathy, seemed attracted by their company. Yes, it was all true. He was, above all, the Friend of sinners. He came to search them out and bring them back to the fold. He had a tender love for the miserable outcast, because she was an outcast, and the compassion of His Sacred Heart went out towards her and longed to bring her back to purity and peace. Am I at all like to Jesus in His pity and love for sinners?

*O*nce upon a time an unhappy woman was brought to Him who had been taken in adultery. She was a great sinner and deserved to die. But how did Jesus treat her? By silence He rebuked her accusers, and then turned with Divine Compassion to the poor adulteress and spoke to her words of peace. Where should I have been? On the side of the accusers or on the side of Jesus?

*J*esus is just the same now, the Friend of sinners, and therefore my friend. He is the Friend of sinners, and therefore woe to me if I am hard on sinners as the Pharisees were. He is the Friend of sinners; I can therefore win His love by showing great kindness and tenderness and love to these, His friends. How many there are whom I might help to love Him, and so take part in the work of Divine charity that He wrought among sinners!

June 17th

The Sacred Heart among Little Children

*A*ll good men love little children. There is something in them that recalls the presence of God, a freshness and innocence which is the mark of His creative hand before sin has marred and almost obliterated it. Our Lord more than once showed the love of His Sacred Heart for children. When a crowd of women came with their little ones begging Him to bless them and the disciples tried to push them aside, Jesus interposed: "Suffer the little children to come to Me." And then He called them one by one and blessed each one, and laid upon each His Sacred Hands. What graces must have flowed into the hearts of those favored children! We should pray for all the little ones whom we love, that our Lord may in like manner bless them.

*O*n another occasion when the children shouted to Him in childish glee: "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" the Pharisees begged Him to silence them. But Jesus rebuked the objection almost sternly; "Have you never read. Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" Perfected praise! As if there was something in their innocent voices sweeter to Him than in any others of the mingled crowd.

*B*ut Jesus bestowed still higher praise on the sweet simplicity of children. He told His disciples that if they wish to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they must become like little children, docile, obedient, cheerful, submissive, affectionate! Am I such?

June 18th

The Cravings of the Sacred Heart

*W*hat is it that we desire, one and all, with a strong desire? It is to be loved. The Heart of Jesus does not differ in this respect from the hearts of ordinary men. He, too, longs for love. While on earth, the bitterest pang of His Sacred Heart was that He came to His own and they refused Him their love. He still desires our love. He still cries out to each of us from His Cross: I thirst--I thirst for your love. Alas! How faintly I have loved in return.

*W*hat sort of a love does He ask for? What are its marks if it is to satisfy Him? (1) It must be a love of obedience. "It you love Me, keep My commandments." It must obey each whispered inspiration; it must have no will save His. (2) It must be a generous love, a love that rejoices in making some sacrifice for Him, a love which counts it a joy to follow in His footsteps and to suffer for Him. (3) It must be a love of compassion. It must grieve at all that grieves Him. It must lament over the sins of others. It must seek to make reparation in some way or other for all the coldness and ingratitude of men.

*H*ow am I to know whether my love is one that at all satisfies the desire of the Sacred Heart? There is one certain test; when self contests my obedience with Jesus, whom do I obey? When self-love resents some injury, do I indulge it? When self-craves some pleasure which Jesus asks me to forego, do I listen to self or to the gentle voice of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

June 19th

The Gratitude of the Sacred Heart

*T*here was never anyone so grateful for every little act of kindness as Jesus Christ while He was on earth. The woman of Samaria gave Him a drink of water, and in return He gave her the grace of eternal life. Zacheus left his business to see Him, and in return salvation came to all his house. St. Mary Magdalen poured upon His head a little box of ointment, and her gift obtained for her a name as long as the world shall last and an everlasting reward in Heaven. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the same now; still grateful for the smallest sacrifice, for each thought of affectionate remembrance.

*T*o those who love Jesus He imparts a sweetness and joy which makes all the joys of earth seem paltry and contemptible. If He sends trials to those who love Him, it is only that He may have an excuse for giving them a greater reward hereafter, and even with the trials He mixes so much peace and lightness of heart that the saints pray for more trials and more sufferings.

*B*ut what is the gratitude of the Sacred Heart in Heaven? Words cannot express it, our hearts cannot imagine it. We shall enter into the joy of our Lord, that is, He will share with us His Own unspeakable happiness. Nay, He Himself will come forth and serve His elect, to prove His exceeding gratitude to every faithful servant. O Jesus, may I be one of those thus honored! May I earn Thy Divine gratitude by my love and my obedience!

June 20th

The Disappointments of the Sacred Heart

We often see a morning that opens bright and fair clouded over before midday, and the afternoon dark and gloomy, ending in storm and desolation. So too there is many a life which opens with the happiest promise; a natural attraction to piety, great graces, good influences, an amicable character give hopes that he to whom these privileges are given will turn out an eminent servant of God, and love with an ever-increasing devotion the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Yet how often the brilliant promise comes to nothing, or next to nothing. The soul which might have risen to a high degree of sanctity, enjoying continual peace and joy, is still battling with passion, anger, sloth, impatience, self-indulgence, vanity, distastes for the things of God, jealousy and ill-feeling, uncharitableness in thought and word. How is it that so little progress has been made? How is it that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been disappointed in His desire for a complete possession of the heart that He loved?

Alas! it is the old story--unfaithfulness to grace in little things. Jesus spoke plainly enough, asking for some little sacrifice, and was refused. He asked again, and another refusal. Gradually His requests became less frequent, and His voice scarce sounded in the ears that had neglected to listen. At length He ceased to ask, or the unfaithful soul ceased to hear His voice. What a sad disappointment for Him. What an irreparable loss for the soul that was thus ungrateful to the invitations of her Divine Spouse. Is not this my case?

June 21st

The Sorrows of the Sacred Heart

*T*he Sacred Heart of Jesus is nothing else than a history of continual sorrow. He is termed in Holy Scripture "the Man of Sorrows." Sorrowful He came into the world: in sorrow He grew up to manhood. In sorrow He gazed into the hearts of men, and saw there what He hated most. In sorrow He witnessed their refusal to listen to His Divine call. In sorrow--bitter sorrow--He watched the falling away of one of the chosen Twelve. In sorrow He heard of the denial of St. Peter. In sorrow He was betrayed, mocked, scourged, crucified. Was there ever sorrow like His?

*W*hat caused Him the greatest sorrow of all? The ingratitude of man. There is nothing that wounds so deeply as love rejected; and this is what Jesus felt every moment of His life. There was never love such as His, and therefore never such sorrow as when it was rejected. O my Jesus! I, too, have returned Thee unkindness, coldness, neglect. Forgive me the sorrow I have caused Thee, and make me love Thee more and more.

*W*as it only here and there that the Sacred Heart of Jesus met with this cause for sorrow? Alas! it was a universal sorrow, not a single child of Adam but added to this sorrow. Even the greatest saints did not return love for love as they ought; all caused Christ to sorrow. All save one; the peerless one, the Immaculate, the ever faithful Mother of God. O Mary, pray for me, that I may never again cause sorrow to the Sacred Heart!

June 22nd

The Sacred Heart among Enemies

*T*here is nothing more painful to the tender heart of one who loves his fellows than to be surrounded with those who look coldly on him, misunderstand him, misinterpret his words, misconstrue his actions. Such a life is in itself a perpetual martyrdom. Such was the life of Jesus. What continual pain and anguish and desolation He must have endured from His youth up, from the hostility of His townsfolk, His own relations, the Scribes and Pharisees, the Ancients and the Rulers.

*Y*et how gentle He is to all, how forbearing. How sweet and patient and winning in his demeanor. They must indeed have been hard and wicked not to have yielded to the fascination of His Divine attractiveness. Yet so it was; they hated Him just because of His meekness, His charity, His holiness. So it is now. The more clearly the beauty of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, shows forth, the more men seem to hate her.

*T*he Sacred Heart, however, with all its Divine gentleness, was very stern in dealing with one class of sinners. All who were leading others wrong were the object of the fierce wrath and indignation of Jesus. This wrath was the more terrible just because of His very gentleness. How He denounces those who give scandal, and those who are the occasion of sin to others! If I have ever led others into sin, I have good cause to tremble before the wrath of the Lamb!

June 23rd

The Sacred Heart at Gethsemane

*D*uring our Lord's Sacred Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, His mental desolation and distress seem to have been more intense, more crushing, than at any subsequent part of His Sacred Passion, save only when on the Cross He cried:

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" During the rest of the Passion He seemed almost to rejoice; but in the Garden He was beaten down, full of terror and sadness, scarce able to endure, pale and haggard and ghastly under the agony of soul that overwhelmed Him. In your desolation think of the utter desolation of the Sacred Heart, and claim its sympathy for you.

*W*hy was our Lord at this time so shorn of His strength and courage? Because then He took upon Himself in detail the sins of the world. His Sacred Heart suffered for them the same blackness of desolation and distress as if they were His own. He voluntarily deprived Himself of every source of comfort, and allowed Himself to feel the effects of sin as none could feel them save one who saw the nature of sin as God sees it.

*O*ne of the lessons to be learned from the awful scene of Christ's Agony is the effect of sin when given its full scope, and its power to destroy the beauty and the strength even of God made Man. If it could work such havoc in the Son of God, what must it do in us? If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

June 24th

The Sacred Heart on Calvary

*W*hen a man is suffering intensely, an impulse must be very strong which turns him from his sufferings. Let us listen to the words that our Lord kept repeating as His executioners nailed Him to the Cross, and as He hung there amid the insults and derision of the Scribes and Pharisees:

"*F*ather, forgive them." This is the prevailing impulse of the Sacred Heart--to obtain forgiveness for those who ill-treated and crucified Him!

"*F*ather, forgive them." This prayer was not offered for those alone who were present on Calvary but for all sinners. Instead of showing indignation at their sins, He only feels pity for them, knowing as He does the terrors of the anger of God. What a lesson for us! When we are offended, our prayer too often is: Father, punish them as they deserve. What a contrast to the prayer of the Sacred Heart!

*B*ut He not only prays for them. He urges an argument in their behalf: "They know not what they do." If they knew what it is to offend God, they would not, could not sin. How ingenious is the Sacred Heart in finding an excuse for His murderers; for all who sin deliberately. Do I make excuses for those who treat me badly? Do I not too often imagine and invent a motive of malice which does not really exist? What a contrast between Jesus and myself! What need I have to pray: "Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart."

June 25th

The Piercing of the Sacred Heart

When our Lord had breathed forth His Soul into the hands of His Eternal Father, the Sacred Heart could for a time no longer continue its work of love for men. But, as if to show that even in death it loved them still. God ordained that it should be pierced by the centurion's lance, and should shed its last drops of blood for man. It was as if He whose lifeless Body hung there was not satisfied with suffering even to death, but needs must show how even in death from His Sacred Body grace and mercy poured forth for the healing of sin.

Out of His Heart flowed blood and water. That blood is the source of life to sinful man. It flows into the soul through all the sacraments of the Church. With it the elect are inebriated, and all the saints before the throne of God have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Reflect on these graces conferred by the Precious Blood, and pray that you may wash in it and be clean.

Out of His Heart too flowed water, that living water of which He said: "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall not thirst for ever." Of that water the redeemed drink in Heaven. Their Lord Himself leads them to the fountains of the water of life. That water now refreshes His servants in this world's weary paths. Jesus, my Lord, give me to drink of that living water that shall make me thirst after Thee, and after naught else but Thee.

June 26th

The Sacred Heart after the Resurrection

When our Blessed Lord rose again from the dead, His Apostles were at first struck with mingled fear and joy. He in His turn seeks to reassure them, condescends to eat with them, to let them touch Him, encourages in them a loving familiarity. Jesus, in the love of His Sacred Heart, does not like men to be afraid of Him--on the contrary, we cannot have too implicit a confidence in Him; we cannot go too far in reverent affection for His Sacred Heart.

The chief point which our Lord seems desirous to secure in His friends is that they should be at peace: at peace in themselves, and at peace with all around them. He knew that without peace no one can ever make progress, no society can prosper. This is why the peace-makers are so dear to His Sacred Heart, and why He gives them the title of being pre-eminently the children of God. Have I peace in my soul? And do I foster and promote peace around me?

Our Lord also seems to be grieved at any doubt or incredulity among His followers respecting the Resurrection. He cannot bear the skeptical spirit. He loves the spirit of simple faith and confidence. He likes us to expect Him to do wonders for us. When we hear of some miracle in the physical or moral order we ought to desire to believe it and to lean to the side of acceptance. The wish to believe will not make us foolishly credulous; it will rather quicken our instinctive perception of truth.

June 27th

The Sacred Heart in Heaven

*N*ow that Jesus has returned to His throne in Heaven, has He forgotten His friends on earth? No, He loves them now as much as ever, nay. He loves them, if it be possible, better than ever. As the world grows old, and the love of many waxes cold, He entertains a greater pity and compassion and love for those who remain faithful to Him. His Sacred Heart still beats in sympathy with every one of us, no less than it did for the poor widow who had lost her son, and for Peter when he denied his Master, or for the disciples in their sorrow and desolation during the three days that He lay in the grave.

*H*ow is our Lord employed in Heaven? When the Apostle speaks of Him at the right hand of God, he describes His life as primarily that of an advocate for sinful man. He is always living to make intercession for us (Hebrews vii. 25.). He is continually holding out to His Father His Hands which bear the marks of the Sacred Wounds, and pleading for sinners. His prayer still is, Father, forgive them! What a consolation for us!

*H*e has another work in Heaven which He Himself announced. He told His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." I go to bestow on you the graces necessary to obtain. I go to help you to fight the battle and win the crown. My Sacred Heart will never be satisfied till you are all there with Me, rejoicing for ever before the throne of God. O Jesus, my Lord and my God! Grant that I may not fail of my eternal reward.

June 28th

The Sacred Heart in the Tabernacle

Where shall we find a better proof of the love of the Sacred Heart for man than in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar? He was not satisfied with proving His love for men by His Sacrifice on the Cross, but He must need to prolong that Sacrifice for all time. There is no moment in which He is not still offering Himself upon some altar to show that He loves us as much as ever.

Nor is this all. When He ascended into Heaven, He promised that He would send the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, to abide forever with His disciples. But, as it were by some Divine afterthought, He seemed not to be satisfied by thus sending the Holy Spirit to take His place. He determined to remain amongst those He loved. In every tabernacle He waits and watches for the visits of His faithful children, longing for them to come and talk to Him and tell Him their troubles and their needs, their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears; and He is always ready to listen to and comfort them and to grant their prayers.

Yet, alas! How often is He neglected? His loving Heart longs for someone to come and hold converse with Him, but how often It looks and longs in vain for hours, or it may be for days. How have I treated Jesus in the tabernacle? Do I pay Him little visits of love when I can and tell Him how I love Him, and wish to love Him more?

June 29th

The Confidences of the Sacred Heart

Our Lord for nearly seventeen hundred years endured in silence all the ingratitude of men. Some faithful hearts had been devoted to Him, but from the generality He had received neglect, coldness, indifference--sometimes outrage, insult, sacrilege. He had witnessed the revolt of thousands and tens of thousands from the Church's yoke. Satan had usurped His place in their hearts, and they had heaped every sort of indignity on His servants, on His Church, on Himself in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. They had denied His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament; they had cast off His yoke and persecuted His servants.

At length our Lord found one heart to which He could confide the story of His disappointments and tell the tale of His sufferings. The Blessed Margaret Mary was unknown, obscure, a poor, feeble woman. But she was so dear to His Heart that He determined to tell her of His griefs, and entrust to her the task of obtaining for Him some comfort and relief in His sorrows. How great a privilege was hers! Would that I had something of her love!

Moved by the devoted love of this faithful servant, our Lord appeared to her, revealed to her the treasures of His Sacred Heart, and complained to her of the cruel treatment He had received from men. Has He not good reason to complain of the way I have treated Him, and am I not one of those who have caused Him so much grief and sorrow?

June 30th

The Best Means of Honoring the Sacred Heart

*T*here is one very simple way of honoring the Sacred Heart. Our Lord promised to Blessed Margaret Mary that wherever an image of it is exposed and honored, it shall bring with it all kinds of blessings. At least we can show the Sacred Heart this external mark of our loyalty, and keep before ourselves a picture which will remind us of the loving sympathy of Jesus.

*E*ach day, moreover, we should at least say some ejaculatory prayers in honor of the Sacred Heart, and each Friday should consecrate ourselves to it, communicating at least on the first Friday in every month. Such Communions persevered in for nine continuous months have attached to them the promise of final perseverance for all who offer them in honor of the Sacred Heart.

*B*ut as the best praise is imitation, we cannot honor the Sacred Heart better than by seeking to imitate its meekness, patience, sympathy. These are such rare gifts. How often have I prayed: Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart! Yet how little do my thoughts and actions correspond to the prayer that I offer! Henceforth I will determine to be kinder to others in honor of the Sacred Heart that has ever been so kind to me.

