



## ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

*The Church in Central and Southern Indiana*

# Leadership Briefing

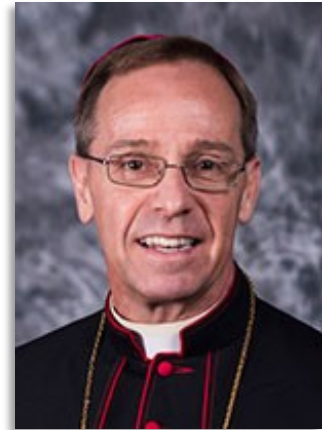
By Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

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### Sacred Heart of Jesus comforts, heals and protects

The publication date for this Leadership Briefing is Friday, June 11, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Devotion to the Sacred Heart first became popular in France, then spread to Poland and other countries, including, at a later period, the United States. The month of June is appointed for this devotion, and since 1929 the feast has been one of the highest rank and is celebrated on the Friday after the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Devotion to our Lord under the auspices of his “most holy heart” was strongly promoted by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a 17th-century French member of the Visitation Order. The devotion to the Sacred Heart was officially recognized 75 years after St. Margaret Mary’s death in 1690. In his encyclical “Miserentissimus Redemptor,” Pope Pius XI stated that our Lord had “manifested himself” to St. Margaret Mary and referred to the conversation between Jesus and this saintly woman several times.



According to St. Margaret Mary, Jesus assured her that “sinners shall find in my heart the source and the infinite ocean of mercy.” The heart is a physical symbol of human love. God’s divine love and forgiveness, which are as boundless as the ocean, are made manifest in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an icon or image of divine mercy incarnate.

Mercy has been a consistent theme of recent popes—including St. John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis—because forgiveness is an absolute prerequisite in the pursuit of peace. Without mercy, warring factions cannot be reconciled. Without an open heart, differences in ideas, beliefs and customs among individuals and groups cannot be resolved in positive ways. Without love, which demands mercy, hatred festers and then explodes into violent words and actions that further divide us from one another.

After more than a year of violence and civil discord—fueled by the isolation and economic distress caused by the pandemic, we need God’s merciful compassion more than ever. We need to open our minds and hearts to the love and peace that can only come from our savior, Jesus Christ.

We Christians believe that the holy heart of Jesus offers comfort, healing and hope to all who turn to him. As St. Margaret Mary writes, the Sacred Heart “will make up for what is wanting in your imperfect actions and sanctify your good ones if only you conform yourself to everything in his holy will.” When we are hurting, afraid or ashamed of our sinfulness, we have only to gaze on the image of Jesus Christ, with his heart open and vulnerable to all, including his enemies, and offer him “this poor heart of mine.”

Jesus welcomes us in spite of our unworthiness. He opens his heart to us—not to condescend to us or just to punish us for our sins, but to forgive us and show us a better way to live. That’s why we pray: “Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death.” The holy heart of Jesus overflows with life-giving grace to guide us, protect us from all evil and open for us the gates of heaven. What’s required of us is openness to God’s will, and the readiness to accept the gifts of divine mercy and tenderness that Jesus offers us unconditionally.

God’s boundless mercy does not condemn us, but it does make demands on us. It requires us to change our minds and hearts and to strive to follow Jesus without counting the cost. None of us is perfect in our discipleship, but devotion to the Sacred Heart can encourage us to encounter the person of Jesus Christ and grow spiritually in our baptismal vocation to know, love and serve God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should not be just a superficial or sentimental expression of piety. It should be a genuine openness to the Lord’s tender mercy and a commitment to changing our minds and hearts in conformity to God’s will.

Let’s pray for the grace to meet Jesus where we are—in need of his love and forgiveness, and confident in his boundless mercy.

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## **Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

*Available on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB):*  
<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/litanies/litany-of-the-sacred-heart-of-jesus>



Heart of Jesus, generous to all who turn to you	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, atonement for our sins	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, overwhelmed with insults	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, broken for our sins	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, obedient even to death	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, pierced by a lance	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, victim of our sins	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, salvation of all who trust in you	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, hope of all who die in you	have mercy on us
Heart of Jesus, delight of all the saints	have mercy on us

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world	have mercy on us
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world	have mercy on us
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world	have mercy on us

Jesus, gentle and humble of heart.	Touch our hearts and make them like your own.
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Let us pray.

Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that we, who glory in the Heart of your beloved Son  
and recall the wonders of his love for us,  
may be made worthy to receive  
an overflowing measure of grace from that fount of heavenly gifts.

Through Christ our Lord. R/. Amen

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## A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

Jesus wanted to show us his heart as the heart that loved so deeply. This is why we have this commemoration today, especially of God's love. God loved us, he loved us with such great love. I am thinking of what St Ignatius told us.... He pointed out two criteria on love. The first: love is expressed more clearly in actions than in words. The second: there is greater love in giving than in receiving.



These two criteria are like the pillars of true love: deeds, and the gift of self. The shepherd close to his flock, to his sheep that he knows one by one. The Lord loves us tenderly. The Lord knows the beautiful science of caresses — God's tenderness. He does not love us with words. He approaches us, and in being close to us gives us his love with the deepest possible tenderness.

More difficult than loving God is letting ourselves be loved by him. Lord, I want to love you but teach me the difficult science, the difficult habit of letting myself be loved by you.... Perhaps this is what we should pray for at Mass. (Homily, Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 7, 2013)

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## My Prayer for You

*“O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.” (Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus)*

*+ Charles C. Thompson*