



Lectio Divina
Solemnity of the Sacred Heart
Friday 19 June 2020

A very warm welcome from St. Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle, in the north of England. As Bishop of the Diocese I would like to invite you to join me for this time of prayer on the beautiful feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Sacred Heart is one of my favourite feasts because it unfolds us to us the mystery of God's love for each one of us. Jesus Christ, the Son of God became a man. At the same time, he remained God therefore his human love for us – as symbolized as coming from the heart – is a divine love, a love which is all embracing and one which is vulnerable and always forgiving. Jesus loves us with an infinite love which manifests itself especially on the Cross. He made himself weak and vulnerable, subjecting himself to the will of the Father so that in our weakness and vulnerability we might draw strength and forgiveness from him. For me, that is the beauty of this feast; we can turn to God, knowing that we are sinners and releasing our weakness and know that he will take us into his loving embrace.

We will now hear a passage of scripture from St. Matthew's gospel saying that to come to the Lord we do not need to be learned or clever but to have trust in his Sacred Heart to find rest for our souls. We shall read the passage slowly and meditatively with pauses between the sentences. The aim is not to tell God the text but to listen to what he wants to tell us. Listening in this way turns to prayer, a quiet prayer in which the Holy Spirit to speak to us. This is a very ancient way of reading the scriptures called *lectio divina* which goes back to the Desert Fathers of the fourth century and is still part of the monastic tradition today.

Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus exclaimed, I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.

Which words or phrases strike you as particularly meaningful to you, today, here and now as you talk to God?

"Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father"

"Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened"

"I will give you rest"

"You will find rest for your souls"



Perhaps these or other words and phrases particularly resonated with you. Take some time now to allow God to speak to you through the text. Perhaps he is challenging you, warning you or reassuring you. Whatever he may be saying accept his word with love and obedience.

Ask the Lord to take the burden of your guilt away from you. Ask him to strengthen and comfort you. In the words of St. Bonaventure, the great Franciscan theologian: *“Run to this source of life and light [the Sacred Heart] with eager longing”*

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque said that three streams gush forth from the heart of Jesus: Mercy for sinners, charity to those who seek the Lord, love and light to those who give themselves to him. Ask Jesus to reveal these streams to you so that you can be transformed by the love of Jesus in to the person he wants you to be.

Listen to the passage again and ask the Sacred Heart of Jesus to draw you close to him who is the fountain of life and the source of our consolation.

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We finish with a prayer of St. John Henry Newman.

“O make my heart beat with Thy Heart. Purify it of all that is hard and cruel.....of all disorder and deadness. So fill it with Thee, that neither the events of the day nor the circumstances of the time may have power to ruffle it, but that in thy love and thy fear it may have peace.”

Glory be.....