



Tau Maria Franciscan Formation Meditations
Mary's Immaculate Heart
A way to God
Gabriel Allegra O.F.M. – *Franciscan Herald Press*

M **Meditation – Marian Consecration**

2 Doctrinal Reflections on Devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart

Are the many Western Marian feasts in the Catholic Church and other churches justified? Before answering, I should like to ask the reader to remember the attitude of St. Augustine (354-430) who praised St. Alipius (c.360-430) for not giving a quick answer that would end any arguments, however complex and difficult.

Now the reason for so many Marian feasts is complicated, but the motive behind their origin is not at all difficult to grasp.

St. Bernardine of Siena says that not even the holy angels fully understand the greatness of Mary. It should not, therefore, be regarded as a marvel that the ever-increasing profundity of the mystery of the Mother of God often blossoms into a rich and varied liturgical cult. We are not dealing with something sentimental but with a richness, the richness of Christ, that richness of which St. Paul speaks – a richness which is the heritage and the glory of the Mother of the Savior and which is gradually becoming better known under the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

In regard to the feast of the Immaculate Heart it is, as I said before, the feast which celebrates the total mystery of Mary, which venerates the whole supernatural richness with which the Living God filled her at her Immaculate Conception, at the Annunciation, at Bethlehem, on Calvary, in the Cenacle-Upper Room, and at her Assumption into heaven – into His home.

A. Devotion to Mary's Person

I propose to be very simple in discussing the doctrinal foundations of devotion to the Immaculate Heart. So let me first remind the reader that any devotion whether public or private to the Heart of Mary is directed to Mary's person, just as the worship of the Heart of Jesus is directed to His Person.

Certainly, the fleshly heart of the Blessed Virgin is to be venerated inasmuch as, from the first instant of its formation, it became the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit and of His impulses during the first nine months of her life. But we especially venerate this Heart because it is the symbol of the perfect love that inflamed Mary toward God and towards her fellowman.

People consider the human heart as the seat and symbol of love and in that sense many passages of Sacred Scripture use it. It was, therefore, inevitable that the Christian soul, meditating on the love of God for men should come to a devotion of the Heart of the God-man Jesus ("He who loved us." Rev 1:5) and to the Heart of Mary, which Jesus on the cross gave us when He said, "Behold your Mother" (Jn 19:27).



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That is not all. Our devotion to Mary's Heart goes beyond the fleshly heart and beyond the symbol. It is directed to the Heart of our Heavenly Mother, inasmuch as it is the total principle of her interior life. It was a natural, loving life, pure and holy, and a supernatural life, which we might call our Mother's life of grace. This life of grace developed and increased until it reached heights known only to God. It was a supernatural life full of all virtues, the charisms of the Holy Spirit. In a word, it possessed the richness of Christ, whence it came and which filled this lovable Heart...

B. The Sum Total of All Marian Mysteries

In light of the foregoing principles I conclude: the cult, the devotion, the theology of the Immaculate Heart is the sum total of all the mysteries, the compendium of all the greatness, of all the virtues, of all the gifts of the Immaculate Mother.

We say "Immaculate Heart" to express all that which Mary is in her relation to the Blessed Trinity, to the Church, and to every son and daughter of the Church. By using the title Immaculate Heart the Church wishes to speak of the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin, of the Mother of Jesus as well as of all the members of His Mystical Body, and also of the Heart of her who is Queen of heaven and the world.

...Our heavenly Mother said at Fatima, "Jesus wants to establish devotion to my Immaculate Heart in order to save the world." And those words seem ever more true and consoling. St. Irenaeus of Lyons (140-220) had already called our Mother "Our Consolation," that is our Consoler, our Comforter, and our Advocate.

...The Holy Spirit is the substantial Love of the Father and the Son. In the Holy Spirit the Immaculate One is the beloved-lover of the Living God, inflamed by the Spirit of Holy Love. Through Him her Heart is revealed as resembling the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, insofar as that is possible in a creature.

Insofar as Mary resembles the Father we can apply to her the tender and burning invocations with which St. Francis (1182-1226) praised our Heavenly Father, "You are Love. You are Wisdom, You are Humility, You are Patience, You are Beauty, You are Security, You are Peace, You are Joy, You are our Hope, You are total and all sufficing Richness, You are Gentleness, You are Guardian, Protector, and our Refuge, You are our Strength...our great Sweetness" (*Praises of the Most High*)

Insofar as the Immaculate Mother resembles the Son we can, by simply reflecting on this title which Jesus loved to give Himself "the Good Shepherd" salute her as did Blessed Diego of Cadiz (1743-1801), "Mother of the divine Shepherd, and caring and loving Shepherdess of our souls. O little lamb of the Lamb who feeds the lambs of Jesus."

Finally, insofar as she resembles the Paraclete, the liturgy and the saints salute her Immaculate Heart thus: "The throne, the altar, the tabernacle of Holy Love, the fountain of life, the never consumed burning bush, the Heart, which after that of Jesus was and is most governed and possessed by the Holy Spirit, filled with His strength, His most perfect instrument, the aroma and the warmth of the Holy Spirit, as He is the aura and fire of the Living God."