

Reflection for June 19, 2020
The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
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Deut. 7:6-11
Psalm 103
I John 4:7-16
Mt. 11:25-30

In the front room of our house was a large, framed picture of Jesus with his Sacred Heart. It was in an honored place as it was in every home on St. Mary's Street.

In turn, each family hosted Monsignor Hickey, who came equipped with holy water and a copy of the Consecration of the home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This picture and prayer experience were part of the collection on "all things Catholic" in our home—and in every home in our Catholic neighborhood.

Catholic things: from the plastic holy water fonts at the door of each bedroom to the vigil light always burning by the statue of the Infant of Prague to the morning offering taped to the bathroom mirror to the family rosary every night kneeling around the living room chairs ... you know the rest.

The Catholic traditions were simply delivered to us. We were "cradled" into the Faith. We welcomed it, lived it and we took it to heart.

We thought it would always be this way—that it would never change—just as our parish church and school would continue to be the atmosphere and guide for our lives—and countless generations after us.

It was not to be the same—as we know so well.

Although many of those practices are no longer the mainstay—front and center—in homes, there does exist faith in many other expressions. I find that to be true and it is a comfort to me.

For many of us in my generation, the bedrock of faith rested with these beginnings, even as we moved into new awarenesses and practices.

A foundation had been set for the flourishing of gifts in spirituality, study, liturgy and prayer. New and deep ways opened up to us—gifts upon gifts.

Maybe we can even spot in our own memories when there was a shift into new learnings and practices. Or, perhaps it was more like an imperceptible growing and soon we found ourselves in a new place—a new relationship with Jesus—it was built from our experience and grown into a devotion of presence, trust and hope. Practices that are grace upon grace.

Mentors from family and friends in those earlier years have joined the ranks of others who formed us in the congregation, in ministry, in the saints we revere and the writers we study. Ritual and story also had their way into shaping our faith. Intertwined—inexplicitly so—was the drama of our life experience.

All of this brings us back to the Feast of today: The Sacred Heart of Jesus and our own heart.

The Gospel today gives us a lift to our wings because it is addressed very personally to us. It is a Heart to heart message.

Jesus speaks from his heart—the one, in the gift of the Incarnation is a heart that was especially chosen to be a human heart.

This is the heart that is presented to us in the very details of what everyone experiences—living, growing, with all the ups and downs, the joys, disappointments, challenges, sufferings and finally death.

This was Jesus' heart too.

This heart reveals the Divine Heart of God who chooses to be present in every life experience. The heart of Jesus is God's heart calling to the weary and the burdened—shouldering the yoke of oppression.

Our hearts then are one with this divine/human heart.

Our hearts that have a bedrock, a foundation in a personal relationship that was nurtured and lived and in countless ways broken loose to embrace and hold and bear the yoke in every corner of the world.

Today, again, the heart of Jesus and our hearts pour out—more than ever to our whole world, every country, every person—and on the streets and in the neighborhoods of our country.

The yoke of centuries of unresolved racism is shouldered by us and is joined in other areas of the world with its diversity of people to shoulder it as well. We are desirous with God's heart to lift that burden that for too long has been a way of life for so many. This horrendous system and structure that is imbedded in our history is crying out for change.

In the midst of the pandemic, we refuse to look away from international protest. We refuse to block our ears to these cries. We refuse to close our hearts because like the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our hearts are directed beyond ourselves.

This Sacred Heart is the Heart of God. It is one with our hearts continuing to beat with love.