

# God Gave Us His Heart in Jesus



(Photo of the Sacred Heart found in Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil's Bible)

Soon it will be Valentine's Day, a day to celebrate love, and hearts, the universal symbol of love, will be visible everywhere. C.S. Lewis in his book **The FOUR LOVES** describes **four types of love:** affection, friendship, eros and charity. Affection has to do with familial love while friendship concerns those deeper relationships where another person becomes like another self. Eros has to do with human sexual love. Charity, the greatest of all, speaks of the love of God, that infinite and unconditional love that is the pure gift of God Himself to us. Theologians call it agape-love. God is the only one Who can be totally self-less, for He is total perfection, sufficient unto Himself, and has no need of anyone or anything else. His love is pure gift. He has given Himself to us in His Beloved Son, Jesus, Whom He sent into our world to lay bare His Heart and to pour out His blood in redemption for our sins so the doors of heaven might be open to us. Jesus satisfied Divine Justice so Divine Love and Mercy would flow upon us like rivers of living water. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for another. The photo of the Sacred Heart of Jesus burning with love for us is the most perfect image of God's love. Jesus is our Valentine from God Who cared enough to send us His very best; Hallmark can barely hint at the love God's Valentine has written on it.

The origin of Valentine's Day takes us back to the days of Roman persecution of Christians. Emperor Claudius issued an edict that forbade young men from marrying before going to battle, as he thought married men made bad soldiers. The priest Valentine secretly married them, which infuriated the emperor. He had Valentine imprisoned and later martyred when Valentine refused to renounce his Faith. While in prison Valentine cured and converted the jailer's daughter. The evening before his death he sent her a note of encouragement in the Faith and signed it, "**from your Valentine.**" In 496 AD Pope Gelasius declared February 14<sup>th</sup>, the day Valentine was martyred, to be **St. Valentine's Day.** For Christians, this is the kind of love we celebrate on Valentine's Day, remembering the love God has for us and which we must share with others. As Jesus laid down His life for us, as St. Valentine laid down his in witness to and service of God, so must we give our lives for love of God and in service of others.

God has written us an abundance of love notes in the words of Sacred Scripture and in the signs and symbols of the sacraments which give us a share in His very life, but nowhere does God give us His Heart more tenderly than in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. In the Eucharist we receive the glorious Christ and the Holy Trinity as we eat Christ's Body and drink His Blood which bind us together in Him as His Mystical Body, His Church, His people. The Beloved disciple John, who laid his head on the Heart of Jesus at the Last Supper, tells us:

**"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. ...Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."**

(1 John 4: 7-17.)

On February 3, 1957 Our Lady spoke these words to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil:

**"My Son asks of souls love, that true love willing to sacrifice itself for the One loved. Man fears to sacrifice himself because he is selfish. If souls would place themselves into my keeping, I would teach them the way of true love. ... But to make your hearts grow more and more like to the Heart of the Son, you must go to the Mother, whose heart is most like His. From this Pure and Immaculate Heart you will learn all that will make you more pleasing to the Divine Heart of the Son of God. The Holy Trinity looks down with infinite delight upon such souls and makes them Its heaven upon earth.**

**(Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, The Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, Ohio, Pgs. 15-17.)**

In his encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, ***Haurietis Aquas, You Shall Draw Water***, Pope Pius XII wrote, "We do not hesitate to declare that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the most effective school of the love of God; the love of God which must be the foundation on which to build the Kingdom of God in the hearts of individuals, families, and nations." (#123) All loves point to the Divine which is their source and fulfillment. Pope Benedict XVI, in ***Deus Caritas Est, God is Love***, gives a beautiful explanation of the necessary unity of ***eros (ascending love)*** and ***agape (descending love)*** and of the necessary union of both body and soul if ***eros*** is to be true to its ordered ascent to what is eternal and divine. He states:

**...man cannot live by oblative, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly, as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow (cf. Jn 7:37-38). Yet to become such a source, one must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. Jn 19:34). ... Love looks to the eternal. Love is indeed "ecstasy", not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through**

**self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God: “Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.” (Lk 17:33) (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, #7, #6, December 25, 2005.)**

St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal taught their followers to lodge in the pierced side of the Savior and to pray with their heads on His Heart so He might communicate His tender Love to them. St. Catherine of Siena spoke of Jesus taking her heart and giving her His own. When Jesus revealed His Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary, He said:

**...that His Heart signified His immense love for us who are the cause of His sufferings that He, in His humanity, willed freely to undergo for our redemption, and especially the outrages He is exposed to in the Blessed Sacrament. He lamented that man largely ignored His great thirst to be loved in the Blessed Sacrament. He told the saint that in Gethsemane, immediately after the Last Supper, as He sweated blood, His great suffering was caused by the ingratitude of men, particularly toward the Blessed Sacrament.**

There is a story of a man and his son who collected famous artwork from around the world and often sat admiring it. Then the son went to war in Vietnam and died while saving a number of his comrades. One day one of the young men whose life the son had saved came to the father's door and gave him the portrait he had painted of the man's son. The father was overwhelmed with how accurately the soldier had captured the features of his son. He placed the portrait in the most prestigious spot in the room. When the father died the artwork was to be auctioned and crowds came to buy it. The auctioneer began with the portrait of the son. No one made a bid and the crowd grumbled; they were only interested in the famous artwork. Finally, the gardener bid \$10. When no counter bid was made, the auctioneer stopped the auction. When the crowd grew rowdy, asking why, the auctioneer informed them there was a stipulation in the father's will, not to be disclosed ahead of time, that whoever bought the portrait of his son would get the whole inheritance, artwork and all. How like our Father in heaven is this story! Are we interested in the famous art of the world or in the priceless portrait of the Father's Son? (author unknown)

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