



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

Resting in the Heart of Jesus

Pastoral Letter on the Renewal of Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

To the Faithful of the Diocese of Hamilton

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The motto of my episcopal coat of arms is *Jesu, in Te confido*, “Jesus, I trust in You” (St. Faustina, *Diary*, 47).

These words express a faith and devotion deeply rooted in my childhood, a devotion that continues to shape my life and ministry. It all began with devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and, over time, developed into devotion to Divine Mercy. It is from this same spiritual wellspring that I now write to you, inviting our entire diocesan family to renew our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I vividly remember the home in which I grew up. In our bedroom, there were two images: the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Every day, our family prayed before them. These were not mere decorations; they were reminders that God’s love was real, present, and active in our lives.

My parents taught us about love and forgiveness not only through words, but through their daily example. They practiced patience, forgiveness, and charity. They loved even when it was difficult. In doing so, they made visible for us the very Heart of Christ.

In May and October, we joined our parish community in devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In June, we turned especially to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Many Catholic homes reflected this rhythm: images of the Sacred Heart were prominently displayed, the rosary was prayed often, and First Friday devotions were faithfully observed.

These practices formed hearts and shaped lives.

Over the years, I have come to understand more deeply that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and devotion to Divine Mercy are not separate realities. They are two complementary ways of contemplating the same mystery: the infinite love of Christ.

The Sacred Heart draws us to the source: the burning love of Jesus for humanity. Divine Mercy shows us that love in action, poured out for sinners, reaching into human suffering, bringing healing and forgiveness.

It must be said honestly: devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has, in many places, faded from our common spiritual life. Some dismiss it as outdated or overly sentimental. Others misunderstand its call to reparation as a focus on suffering rather than love. At times, even its artistic expressions have made it difficult for people to connect with its meaning.

And yet, something precious is lost when this devotion fades from our lives.

In a world that so often feels cold, divided, and wounded, we need a deeper experience of God's love, which is not abstract, but personal; not distant, but near.

In the biblical sense, the heart is the centre of the person, the source of life, desire, and identity. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God promised to replace our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. In the Gospel of John, the Heart of Christ becomes the source of living water, the place of rest, and the wellspring of the Church itself.

Therefore, to rediscover the Sacred Heart is to rediscover the Gospel.

This devotion has deep roots in the life of the Church. It grew in the Middle Ages through meditation on the humanity and Passion of Christ. It flourished in the 17th century through saints such as Francis de Sales, John Eudes, Jane Frances de Chantal, and Margaret Mary Alacoque.

Through the visions granted to Saint Margaret Mary between 1673 and 1675, the Church received renewed insight into the love of Christ's Heart, along with practices such as the Holy Hour and First Friday devotion.

The Church has consistently affirmed this devotion. Pope Pius IX extended the feast of the Sacred Heart to the universal Church. Pope Leo XIII consecrated the world to the Sacred Heart in 1899.

Pope Pius XII teaches that Christ alone can open the "fountain of living water," so that it "irrigates the parched land and transforms it into a fruitful and flourishing garden" (*Haurietis Aquas*, §30).

More recently, Pope Francis, in his encyclical letter *Dilexit Nos*, has called for a renewed and authentic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He said: "For this reason, I turn my gaze to the heart of Christ and I invite all of us to renew our devotion to it" (DN, no. 87).

He emphasizes that this devotion must be interior, not merely external or sentimental: "Devotion to Christ's heart is essential for our Christian life to the extent that it expresses our openness in faith and adoration to the mystery of the Lord's divine and human love" (DN, no. 83).

He reminds us that the heart of Christ is the place where we come to know both God and ourselves. There we learn to love, to serve, and to build a more just and compassionate world.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not merely a set of practices. It is a way of life. It teaches us how to love in a world that often forgets how.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta once spoke of the great poverty of our time as a lack of love. The Sacred Heart responds to this poverty by inviting us to love as Christ loves: generously, patiently, even sacrificially.

This means loving not only those who love us, but also those who are difficult, distant, or even hostile. It means offering forgiveness when it is not deserved, and kindness when it is not returned.

Such love is not easy. It is only possible with God's grace. But it is precisely this love that transforms the world.

Therefore, as your bishop, I invite every member of our diocesan family in our homes, parishes, schools, and Catholic Institutions to renew devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In a world marked by division, suffering, and uncertainty, let us turn to the heart of Jesus with confidence. Let us contemplate His Heart, pierced for love of us, and allow that love to touch our lives, so that we may entrust ourselves to Him completely. In the words of Pope Francis: "I ask our Lord Jesus Christ to grant that his Sacred Heart may continue to pour forth the streams of living water that can heal the hurt we have caused, strengthen our ability to love and serve others, and inspire us to journey together towards a just, solidary and fraternal world. Until that day when we will rejoice in celebrating together the banquet of the heavenly kingdom in the presence of the risen Lord, who harmonizes all our differences in the light that radiates perpetually from his open heart. May he be blessed forever." (DN 220)

Dear brothers and sisters, the Heart of Jesus is open. He waits for us and invites us to come to Him.

Let us entrust ourselves and our families to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and ask for the grace to love, to serve, and to walk together in hope.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

† *Joseph Dabrowski*

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