

Closing Prayer

God of love,
you set your heart upon the least of nations,
and in the heart of Jesus
you reveal your love to the merest of children.

Make us simple enough to receive your great love,
and strong enough to bear it to others.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers, Sacred Heart, Year A²

CPL • LBC Year A Divine Compassion.odt • 2020-06-02

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,*

The Divine Compassion of Christ

*The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
(Second Friday after Trinity Sunday)*

Principal Service readings

Deuteronomy 7.6-11	A people consecrated to the Lord
Psalms 103.1-4, 6-8, 10	The Lord is compassion and love
1 John 4.7-16	Let us love one another
Matthew 11.25-30	'You will find rest for your souls'

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Good news revealed to the simple

[Jesus said], ²⁵'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Matthew 11.25-30 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Eight days after the feast of Corpus Christi the church celebrates the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This is really focused on the

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

compassion of Jesus, and also has the title of The Divine Compassion of Christ. It is often represented graphically by the image of a heart, sometimes surrounded by thorns. This, then, is not a romantic image, but conveys the suffering love of Christ.

The idea of the feast goes back many centuries, at least to the time of St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153). Whereas most of the feasts of Jesus celebrate particular events, this is an ‘idea’ feast, that celebrates his love, loving compassion, but also loving suffering and pain. The great Franciscan saint, Bonaventure, wrote these beautiful words: ‘I have found this Heart in the Eucharist when I have found there the Heart of my Sovereign, of my Friend, of my Brother, that is to say, the Heart of my friend and Redeemer. ... Come, my brothers, let us enter into this loving Heart never again to go out from It.’ It was promoted especially by St Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690), a French nun, who received several visions or revelations, the first on 27 December 1673.

The gospel reading for this feast begins with a prayer of Jesus to the Father. The prayer reflects a ‘high Christology’, reminiscent of John’s gospel, and causes us to reflect on the unique and intimate relationship that the Father and Son have with each other. Jesus praises the Father because he has hidden ‘these things from the learned and clever’, and has revealed them instead to ‘mere children’. The good news is not complicated but accessible, not exclusive but inclusive, and embraces even the lowly and humble. Those who come to Jesus in simplicity, humility and trust, will find refreshment and rest.

Jesus preached a message of hope to those who had been locked out of the benefits of society – to the slaves, those cheated of their wages, those in debt-bondage, those oppressed by others. Jesus chose to side with those who were ‘mere children’ – people without rights, without a voice, without power.

Quotations

1

As to persons living in the world, they shall find in this devotion all the aids necessary in their state of life: peace in their homes, consolation in their work, the blessing of heaven upon all their enterprises, comfort in

their sorrows, a secure refuge during life and especially at the hours of death. It is plainly evident that there is no one in the world who will not receive all kinds of heavenly blessings if they have a true love of Jesus Christ manifested by a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, 1647-1690

2

O Heart all loveable and all loving of my Saviour, be the Heart of my heart, the Soul of my soul, the Spirit of my spirit, the Life of my life and the sole principle of all my thoughts, words and actions, of all the faculties of my soul and of all my senses, both interior and exterior. Amen.

St. John Eudes, 1601-1680

3

Do not let the past disturb you. Leave everything in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and begin again with joy.

St. Teresa of Calcutta, 1910-1997

Related topics

For further study:

Sacred Heart of Jesus; Trinity; Christology; charity/agape; paschal mystery