

Closing Prayer

God of life and love,
from the pierced heart of your Son
flowed water and blood,
cleansing the world
and giving birth to your Church.

Renew within your people
the love poured out on us in baptism,
and through the blessing-cup we share
keep us always faithful
to your life-giving covenant.

We make our prayer 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 B²

CPL • LBC Year B Divine Compassion.odt • 2022-12-06

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

Hosea 11.1 & 3-4 & 8c-9 My heart recoils

Psalm: Isaiah 12.2-3 & 4bcd & 5-6 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation

Ephesians 3.8-12 & 14- 19 The love of Christ is beyond all knowledge

John 19.31-37 One of the soldiers pierced his side and there came out blood and water

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

The pierced Christ

³Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. ³²Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. ³⁵(He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) ³⁶These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.' ³⁷And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

John 19.31-37 NRSV¹

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.

Comments and Questions

The feast of the Divine Compassion of Christ (the Sacred Heart) is celebrated on the second Friday after Trinity Sunday. It honours Christ for the love he showers on humanity. That love is symbolised by his heart. The earliest origins of this devotion can be traced back to the church Fathers who stressed certain passages in John (7.37; 19.34). Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux also quoted similar passages in the twelfth century, followed by others such as Albert the Great and Bonaventure in the thirteenth century.

French Oratorians Pierre Berulle and John Eides moved the devotion to an official level. After receiving permission from his bishop, John Eudes celebrated the first feast to honour the Sacred Heart in his community.

A nun of the Visitation, Margaret Mary Alacoque, had a series of visions encouraging her to work towards establishing the feast, on the Friday after Corpus Christi, but a further hundred years were to pass before the feast was officially celebrated – Pius IX made it obligatory in 1856.

The feast celebrates the intensity of Christ's love, not a particular event: Christ sacrificed his life out of love for the world.

Quotations

1

He opened the gate of his heart, the treasure house of the blessed Godhead, and she entered into a vineyard. There she saw from dawn to dusk a river of living water, and around the river twelve trees carrying twelve fruits which are the virtues St Paul speaks of in his epistle: love, joy, peace and so forth.

Mechthild of Hackeborn, 13th century

2

Just as we might view the birth of Jesus as the arrival of God's love and light into a world grown cold and dark through sin, so we might view the growth of the devotion to the Sacred Heart as a response to the world grown cold though the religious confusion and a popular heresy of the time.

Fr. Donald Miller, OFM, 1945–2017

3

Boundless love! I plunge into your fire and the flames that fill all creation so I might love you in all places in everything. Jesus, I offer you all the boundless love of your Sacred Heart, the heart of your Father and the heart of your Mother, and all the hearts that love you in heaven and on earth. How I long for the universe to be transformed into flaming fires of love for you.

St John Eudes, 1601–1680

4

And since there is in the Sacred Heart a symbol and a sensible image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ which moves us to love one another, therefore is it fit and proper that we should consecrate ourselves to His most Sacred Heart – an act which is nothing else than an offering and a binding of oneself to Jesus Christ, seeing that whatever honour, veneration and love is given to this divine Heart is really and truly given to Christ Himself.

Pope Leo XIII, from the encyclical *Annum Sacrum*. 1899

Related topics

For further study:

Sacred Heart of Jesus; Trinity; Christology; charity-agape; paschal mystery; covenant