

The Divine Compassion of Christ

Sacred Heart of Jesus • Second Friday after Trinity Sunday

Principal Service readings

Ezekiel 34.11-16	The lost I will seek out
Psalms 23.1-3a & 3b-4 & 5,6	The Lord is my shepherd
Romans 5.5b-11	The proof of God's love
Luke 15.3-7	Share my joy: I have found my lost sheep

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

Parable of the lost sheep

³So he told them this parable: ⁴“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.” ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

Luke 15.3-7 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

How do we feel about people who are lost, about sinners? Do we condemn them? Jesus' leadership is one of unstinting love. He does not abandon the wayward, the error-prone, the difficult, but goes out to retrieve them. He finds them where they are and brings them home.

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.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep shares themes of loss, searching, and rejoicing with the Parable of the Lost Coin which follows it in Luke 15. when depicted in art it is usually portrayed as a sheep being carried on the shoulder of the Good Shepherd. Thus, the predominant thought is of the Good Shepherd rather than the (formerly lost) sheep.

Jesus shows in this parable the inestimable value of every person, however lost. It shows the compassion of one who is determined not to lose one soul, however much effort that involves.

The feast of 'The Divine Compassion' or 'Sacred Heart of Jesus' is an 'idea' feast. It focuses on the love that Christ showers upon humanity, which is symbolised by his heart. The earliest origins of such a devotion can be traced back to the church Fathers who stressed certain passages in John (7.37; 19.34). Anselm (1033/34–1109) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) also cited similar passages in the twelfth century, followed by others such as Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280) and Bonaventure (1221–1274) in the thirteenth century. French Oratorians Pierre de Bérulle (1575–1629) and John Eudes (1601–1680) helped move the devotion to an official level. It received a boost from a series of visions of Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690), a nun of the Visitation order, which led to the establishment of the feast on the Friday after Corpus Christi.

Quotations

1

Oh, how great is the goodness of God, greater than we can understand. There are moments and there are mysteries of the divine mercy over which the heavens are astounded. Let our judgement of souls cease, for God's mercy upon them is extraordinary.

St Maria Faustina Kowalska, 1905–1938

2

The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.

C. S. Lewis, 1898–1963

3

May both of them [Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II] teach us not to be scandalized by the wounds of Christ and to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of divine mercy, which always hopes and always forgives, because it always loves.

Pope Francis, 1936–

Related topics

For further study:

Sacred Heart; Trinity; christology; forgiveness

Closing Prayer

Eternal God,
in Christ you have sought us
with a shepherd's heart,
and we have rejoiced
to be found and restored.

Multiply in all the world
the wonders of your saving grace,
and gather your scattered people
until heaven resounds in jubilation
at humanity made whole
and creation restored.

We ask 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 C²

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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.*