

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jun 7th 2024

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!

The devotion to the Sacred Heart, with its ancient origins, gained significant popularity in the Church, particularly in the seventeenth century through the efforts of a French mystic, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, in 1673. In her autobiography, she narrated the renowned twelve promises of the Sacred Heart, which led to the pious practice of the nine first Fridays of the month.

It is through her advocacy that the Feast of the Sacred Heart, a significant event in the Christian calendar, was established. In 1856, Pope Pius IX elevated the feast to a solemnity in the Universal Church, celebrated on the Friday after the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. On 11 June 1899, Pope Leo XIII consecrated humanity to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In today's Gospel, the evangelist narrates the scene of Jesus' death on the Cross, stating, "...but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out." This detail is not without significance. The Greek word used by the evangelist to describe the act of opening the side of Christ is the same word used by the author of Genesis to describe the act of God opening the side of Adam to create a partner for him!

From Chapter one, John presents his Gospel as a retelling of a new Genesis, a new creation – mirroring the creation story of the Book of Genesis. The blood and water flowing from Jesus' side symbolize the birth of a new spiritual creation. Blood is the symbol of the Eucharist and water symbolises Baptism. Through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist flowing from the broken Heart of Jesus, he creates his Church.

We, the new creation of Jesus, have our origins in the wounded, yet compassionate Heart of Jesus. Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!