Columns
Horizons
Spirituality



(CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz)



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June 30, 2023

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June is called Love Month. The church dedicates this month to honoring the heart of Jesus, the inexhaustible source of love.

On Feb. 6, 1965, the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pope Paul VI issued an apostolic letter on devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Paul VI affirms that such devotion is very noble and especially necessary for today's era. He urged Christians to fervently adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus during the liturgical hours as a way to be renewed and make reparations for the sins of humanity that have offended his Sacred Heart.

The devotion Paul VI encouraged is essentially about honoring Jesus with dignity.

Every year, parishes in Vietnam spend the whole month of June honoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the day of the solemnity, parishes organize various activities such as a procession of the Sacred Heart statue around the church or solemn Eucharist adoration after Mass.

In addition, priests always celebrate weekly Friday Mass to remember the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When we honor the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that is, the purest and most tender part, we also remember the love that God has for human beings — an infinite love.

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Jesus came to earth and showed his love to mankind by accepting all human weaknesses and sins. He had compassion on the suffering and sinners, and healed all human diseases and infirmities. He faced heartbreak at the death of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15), the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:32-44), the indifference of his closest disciples and the betrayal of Judas Iscariot.

The more sinful man became, the more Jesus' heart revealed its capacity to love and forgive. St. Margaret Mary compared the heart of Jesus to an inexhaustible fountain that seeks to pour its love into humble hearts.

In the church, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque is known for her special love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The saint dedicated herself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and helped many sinners to be converted.

In order to truly love and please God, one must consecrate oneself to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

During the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the church invites each of us Christians to honor the heart of Jesus by loving one another as Jesus did. This means having a selfless heart that only gives and forgets oneself, always willing to sacrifice for others so they can be happy.

Paul writes: "Jesus loved us, and gave himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:2). When we live like God and have God's heart, we will experience his true love.



The procession of the Sacred Heart statue around a church in Vietnam (Courtesy of Mary Nguyen Thi Phuong Lan)

Sadly, in Vietnam, there has been an increase in crime, violence and rage, causing citizens to be afraid of going out and lose hope in the future. Even close relationships, such as between husband and wife or brothers and sisters, are being betrayed.

This is due to people only superficially living together instead of being true to their hearts. As a result, people are becoming more and more insensitive to the pain of others.

However, if we learn to listen to the whispers of the heart, all our actions in life will be oriented to achieve good things.

Our diligent prayer and practice of God's word will make our hearts like the heart of God — gentle, tolerant, and generous. By committing to the spiritual life, our heart of flesh will become like God's — one that loves everyone, especially the poor, and is moved by the suffering of others. We will also learn to share what we have for those less fortunate.

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus said that love reciprocates love. Jesus accepted the painful cross, because he wanted to show us how great God's love is, a love beyond human reasoning. As stated in John 15:12, "Love one another as I have loved you."

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God wants us to love all human beings and to live together with sincere hearts regardless of whether one is rich or poor, virtuous or any other difference.

According to Hanoi Bishop Joseph Vu Van Thien's "Meditation on the Heart of God — the Heart of Man," every person desires love, respect and peace in their life. When we prioritize these values as the foundation and guide for our actions, we can eliminate divisions and hatred and experience true happiness.

The month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus calls for every Christian to pray fervently and invite the Heart of Jesus to guide and accompany us every day, while forgiving our mistakes. The Lord is also ready to be with us through the Eucharist daily.

May we recognize God's love so that we can always live in love and trust even in precarious situations. May we know how to show our love of God through concrete charitable acts, such as generously sharing food and clothing for the poor and sick, and humbly serving them because they are the embodiment of God who was

abandoned on the cross.