

Where Did Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Come From?

The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart is celebrated throughout the world on the Friday following the Feast of Corpus Christi.

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Every year, 19 days after Pentecost, the Catholic Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But where did that tradition originate?

Devotion to the wounded heart of Jesus has its origins in the eleventh century, when pious Christians meditated on the Five Wounds of Christ. There grew up among the faithful prayers to the Sacred Heart, prayers to the Shoulder Wound of Christ—private devotions which helped Christians to focus on the passion and death of Christ, and thus to grow in love for our Savior who had suffered and died for us.

It was not until 1670, however, that a French priest, Fr. Jean Eudes, celebrated the first Feast of the Sacred Heart.

Around the same time, a pious sister by the name of Margaret Mary Alacoque began to report visions of Jesus. He appeared to her frequently, and in December 1673, he permitted Margaret Mary—as had once allowed St. Gertrude—to rest her head upon his Heart. As she experienced the comfort of his presence, Jesus told her of his great love and explained that he had chosen her to make his love and his goodness known to all.

The following year, in June or July of 1674, Margaret Mary reported that Jesus wanted to be honored under the figure of His Heart of flesh. He asked the faithful to receive Him in the Eucharist frequently, especially on the First Friday of the month, and to observe a Holy Hour of devotion to Him.

And then in 1675, during the octave of Corpus Christi, Margaret Mary received the vision which came to be known as the “great apparition.” Jesus asked that the modern Feast of the Sacred Heart be celebrated each year on the Friday following Corpus Christi, in reparation for the ingratitude of men for the sacrifice which Christ had made for them.

The devotion became popular after St. Margaret Mary’s death in 1690. However, because the Church is always careful in approving a private apparition or devotion, the feast was not established as an official feast for all of France until 1765.

On May 8, 1873, the devotion to the Sacred Heart was formally approved by Pope Pius IX; and 26 years later – on July 21, 1899 – Pope Leo XIII urgently recommended that all bishops throughout the world observe the feast in their dioceses. Pope Leo [approved](#) the following indulgences for the devotion:

- For performing the devotion publicly or privately, seven years and seven quarantines (the remission of temporal punishment equivalent to what would be granted for forty days of penance) each day;
- If the devotion is practiced daily in private, or if a person assists at least ten times at a public function, a plenary indulgence (remission of all temporal punishment for sins) on any day in June or between July 1-8 (Decree *urbis et orbis*, May 30, 1992);
- The indulgence *toties quoties* (for the souls in Purgatory) on the thirtieth of June or the last Sunday of June (January 28, 1908) in those churches where the month of June is celebrated solemnly. Pius X (August 8, 1906) urged a daily sermon, or at least for eight days in the form of a mission (January 26, 1908);
- To those priests who preach the sermons at the solemn functions in June in honor of the Sacred Heart, and to the rectors of the churches where these ceremonies are held, the privilege of the Gregorian Altar on June 30 (Pius X, August 8, 1906).
- A plenary indulgence for each communion in June, and to those who promote the solemn celebration of the month of June (“Acta Pontificia”, IV, 388, August 8, 1906)

Today, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart is celebrated throughout the world on the Friday following the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Promises of the Sacred Heart

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life.
2. I will give peace in their families.
3. I will console them in all their troubles.
4. I will be their refuge in life and especially in death.
5. I will abundantly bless all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection.
9. I will bless those places wherein the image of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and venerated.
10. I will give to priests the power to touch the most hardened hearts.
11. Persons who propagate this devotion shall have their names eternally written in my Heart.
12. In the excess of the mercy of my Heart, I promise you that my all powerful love will grant to all those who will receive Communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months, the grace of final repentance: they will not die in my displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments; and my Heart will be their secure refuge in that last hour.

Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me [health](#) of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.

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