



Sacred Heart of Jesus

**May the loving heart of Jesus bring
to one and all of you its own true spirit -
Its spirit of love, true charity and
sweet humility.**

Mary MacKillop 1890

**May the Sacred Heart of Jesus fill you
with love that you burn and glow with it
more and more.**

Julian Tenison Woods 1879

The Feast of the Sacred Heart invites us to contemplate the Heart of Jesus – the heart of the one who, through word and deed, revealed how we might contribute to the healing and wholeness of our world. Jesus, who opened the eyes of the blind, reached out to those on the margins, and welcomed the outcast, continues to offer humanity, hope and a way forward. His life is a living call to each of us to take up his mission with courage and compassion.

Each of us is invited to be the heart of God on Earth. How we live this out will differ, shaped by our unique circumstances and the needs we encounter. Yet in opening our hearts to others, we also allow ourselves to be touched, changed and renewed by them.

May the Heart of Jesus – radiating the unconditional love, mercy and tenderness of our Creator God – bring renewed hope to our world and inspire us to be bearers of that same love wherever we go.

Light a candle

“Open my mind to know your voice.”

“Open my hands to do your work.”

“Open my heart to feel your presence.”

Come into a quiet place...

Focus on your breath...

Clear your mind of other thoughts and settle into God's love and mercy.



Prayer

Listening heart of God, we praise you with open hearts.

Compassionate heart of God, we praise your merciful love.

Responding heart, overflowing with love, we praise your unending love for your world.

Context for the Word

This encounter in Mark's Gospel, happens during the final week of Jesus' life. Jesus remains in the Temple area, which adds weight to his teachings as tensions rise between him and the religious leaders.

During this time, Jesus faces a series of challenges from the authorities, who question the source of his power. The back-and-forth style involves quoting scripture to argue a point, with each side responding with their own interpretation. Mark presents this exchange as a hostile effort by the leaders to trap Jesus and find a reason to eliminate him. Despite their efforts, Jesus consistently outsmarts his opponents, leaving them frustrated.

The First Commandment

Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question., or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1989, 1993

Reflection

At the heart of the passage in Mark is the question of priority: What really matters? Is it being faithful to tradition? Is it careful and sometimes clever working within a political, social or economic system in order "to get by"? Is it doing the right thing? Or is there something more?

The Scribe's question then, when seen in this context, opens up these questions. If I am faithful to all that has been given to me; if I am a good person who sincerely does the right thing and is faithful to the traditions that have been handed on to me from my parents and family; then isn't that

enough? Asking Jesus to name the greatest commandment when I am surrounded by so many is



perhaps the question that cries out from the Scribe's heart just as much as it may well cry out from mine. And Jesus answers that the ground upon which all else is built is love of God and love of neighbour. It is a love that is sacrificial. I say I love God with all my being, but it is in the way I treat my neighbour – not my blood family – which shows whether my love is real or not. Everything else comes second; and that most likely means making choices and sometimes those choices may come at a cost.

When do I recognise that others love me?

When do I recognise God's love for me?

How do I experience God's transforming love?

How do I make God's transforming love present in the world?

Ezekiel 36: 27-28

"I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them. You will live in the land I gave to your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God."



Intercessions

Gather my needs and place them before the living God whose love for me and the world is overflowing.

I pray that the Sacred Heart of Jesus brings an answer to the needs of people in poverty, danger or war.

May the flame of the love of Christ keep burning in our hearts.

I pray for those affected by drought, flood and natural disaster. That the generosity of all people reflects the concerned Heart of Jesus.

May the flame of the love of Christ keep burning in our hearts.

I pray for the sick and enfeebled. That the healing Heart of Jesus be their comfort at this time.

May the flame of the love of Christ keep burning in our hearts.

I pray for the Church and its leaders. That they may be models of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

May the flame of the love of Christ keep burning in our hearts.

I pray for those who have died. That they may experience a joy that the world cannot give.

May the flame of the love of Christ keep burning in our hearts.

Jesus, bless me with a deep awareness of the world's needs. Bless me with a heart that cares compassionately and that reflects your love in my family and my community. Reshape my heart as I place my trust in you. Amen

Let us lift our hearts in prayer as Jesus taught us. Our Father...

Blessing

May God bless us with listening
and open hearts to the needs of our world.

May God bless us with responding hearts
that care for the homeless and those in need.

May God bless us with hearts that create
communities wherever we are.

May God bless us with the fire of love on our journey.
Amen

