

## ARTICLE 13

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

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#### Marriage a gift from God – Family Prayer and Devotion

##### **The Essential Nature of Marriage.**

Through Sacred Scripture we discovered the essential nature of marriage. Children are the primary end of marriage therefore; marriage must always remain open to life; marriage can only be between one man and one woman; marriage is for life; marriage is indissoluble; those who wish to marry must be free to marry and the consent given to marry must be given freely. We discovered Christ's teaching on marriage through the Gospels and we looked at some of the advice given by Saints Peter and Paul on how best to live the married state. Now we are going to take a little detour and have a look at family prayer and in particular the practice of devotion.

##### **Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus – The King of Devotions**

The month of June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus towers above and beyond all other Church devotions. It is the King of devotions and I would encourage all, especially families, to practice this devotion. St John tells us that God is Love. The heart is the symbol of Love and so devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is nothing other than devotion to the Love of Christ. All other devotions seek to bring us to the Love of Christ, to bring us into the Sacred Heart of Jesus as it were for, ultimately, we are all called to live in Heaven united in the love of the Holy Trinity. The Sacred Heart of Jesus perfectly symbolises this love.

##### **St Margaret Mary, St Gertrude, St Mechtilde**

In our day, the revelations given to St Margaret Mary Alacoque are what inform us about this devotion. But this devotion was also revealed to St Gertrude the Great who was born on January 6<sup>th</sup> 1256 and to St Mechtilde of Hackeborn, who was appointed to take charge of St Gertrude in the Benedictine Abbey of Helfta, in Saxony, Germany. St Gertrude had a great desire for the salvation of sinful souls and for the release of the Holy Souls from purgatory and Christ revealed to her the best means to obtain these desires.

##### **The Passion and the Eucharist**

St Gertrude was a little nervous about committing her revelations to writing but Our Lord reassured her saying *“It is the love of My Heart which has inspired your writings; I wish them to be for later ages the evidence of My love, to draw souls to My Heart.”* The principle objects of devotion to the Sacred Heart were revealed to St Gertrude as being the love of His Heart in His passion and the love of His Heart in the most Holy Eucharist.

Once when St Gertrude kissed her crucifix, Christ said to her:

*“Each time that a man does so, or merely looks upon a crucifix with devotion, the mercy of God looks down upon his soul. He ought then to think in his heart that these tender words are addressed to him: 'Behold how for thy love I have willed to be attached to a cross, naked, disfigured, covered with wounds, and with all My members violently distended. My heart is so passionately enamoured of thee that, were it necessary in order to save thee, I would again willingly endure, for thee alone,*

*all that I have suffered for the salvation of the whole world' ”*

### **Christ delights to be with men**

Christ then revealed to St Gertrude the love of His Divine Heart in the most Holy Eucharist

*“My delights are to be with the children of men. To satisfy My love I have instituted this sacrament. I have obliged Myself to remain therein even to the end of the world, and I wish it to be frequently received. Should anyone deter a soul from Communion, he would impede the delight of My Heart. I have done my utmost to manifest the tenderness of My Heart in the Blessed Eucharist. When, impelled by the vehemence of My love, I enter a soul by Communion, I fill it with graces, and all the inhabitants of Heaven and earth, and all the souls in Purgatory, experience at the same moment some new effect of My bounty”*

### **Recommended Prayer for Souls**

Our Lord recommended the following method of prayer to St Gertrude

*“Each time thou wouldst pray for any souls, offer Me My most gracious Heart, in union with the love which made Me take this human heart for the salvation of mankind, and in union with that especial love with which I have given it to thee so often, and I will then grant thee whatever thou mayest ask for men. It will be as if the safe of a rich man were brought to him, that he might draw from it presents for his friends”*

Just after my own marriage, my wife started a novena to St Therese. I was working as an assistant manager in a pub restaurant at the time. The building was being renovated and, in a back corridor, I found an old picture of the Sacred Heart amongst some timber that was destined for the skip. I received permission to take this image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus home with me, and I presented Him to my wife. A most fragrant rose from St Therese! He still has pride of place in our sitting room and our marriage has been richly blessed through this devotion. I strongly recommend this devotion to all families.

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