

ARTICLE 14

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

Marriage a gift from God

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Family Prayer and Devotion – The Sacred Heart

It's not easy to be Catholic.

It has never been easy to live life as a Catholic and this is still true today, especially in Ireland, where hostility to the Catholic Faith seems to have reached an all time high amongst the Irish and the faith is regularly derided by those who do not believe and is often poorly presented or distorted by those who do believe in order not to cause offence to secularists. In the prayer, Hail Holy Queen, we recall that we are banished, that we live in a vale of tears and that we are in exile. This earth is not our home but it is a difficult time of trial on our journey to Heaven.

Christ is only too aware of our fallen human nature. He knows us better than we know ourselves and His great desire for us is that we should be with Him in Heaven. Our heavenly home should be the focus of all of our thoughts, words and actions. Christ established the Catholic Church to aid us in our journey and He gave us seven sacraments so that we would have sufficient grace to live holy lives. But in His great love for us, even though the sacraments are sufficient for our salvation, Christ also established certain devotional practices through several of His saints and He also sent the Blessed Virgin with more devotions to show us the excess of God's love for us His children and to reveal to us the simple secrets of sanctity.

Sometimes we may doubt God's love for us

Sometimes our own faults, failings, hardships, trials and sinfulness can cause us to doubt the love of God for us, because we realise that we do not love and trust Him as we ought to do. Our Lord said to St Mechtilde when she was praying for someone in great affliction *“Let her, with childlike simplicity, bring all her troubles to Me; let her seek her consolation in My compassionate Heart, and I will never abandon her”*. St Mechtilde added that Jesus has bestowed on us the gift of His Heart, in order that we may, when in sorrow, seek our refuge and our consolation therein.

On another occasion St Gertrude asked one of her sisters to beg God to correct her failures. Our Lord said to this sister *“Just as a field covered with manure becomes in consequence more fertile, so the knowledge which Gertrude has of her failures makes her gather fruits of grace much more delicious. Besides, I hide them by the abundance of My gifts, and in time will transform them into as many virtues”*.

Sin is a fact of our lives

Sin is a fact in our lives. St John tells us in his first letter *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”* (1 John 1: 8 – 10) Christ is aware of our sinfulness and He desires us to come to Him with our sins so that He may cleanse us and lead us to perfection.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart

Devotion to the Heart of Jesus urges us to abandon ourselves to the Heart of Christ and to have absolute trust in Him. As we saw previously the primary objects of this Devotion are the Eucharist and the Passion of Christ and so our response to the Sacred Heart includes Eucharistic adoration, thanksgiving, and making acts of reparation for our own sins and for the sins of others.

Our Lord said to St Gertrude once when she was gazing in adoration at the Blessed Sacrament,

“Each time that anyone thus looks lovingly at the Host, which contains sacramentally My Divine Body, he will increase his merits for Heaven, and add to his eternal joys an especial delight, corresponding to that with which he devoutly contemplated this precious Body on earth”

How to please Jesus

St Mechtilde asked Our Lord how men most pleased Him. He replied

“When he meditates with deep gratitude, and continually remembers all the sufferings and injuries I endured during thirty three years; in what poverty I lived, what insults I had to support from My creatures, and finally, how much I suffered on the Cross, dying by the most bitter death for the love of man, to redeem his soul by My precious Blood, and render it my faithful spouse. let each one be animated with as much love and gratitude for all these benefits as if I had suffered them for him alone”.

You can read more about devotion to the Sacred Heart according to St Gertrude in the book “Love, Peace, and Joy” by Fr André Prévot, which gives thirty days of meditations and from which the quotations used in these articles come from.

Next week, in order to encourage families to take up the Sacred Heart devotion we will begin looking at St Margaret Mary Alacoque and the twelve promises given by Jesus for those who adopt this devotion in their lives including the wonderful promise of peace in their families.

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Author: John Lacken
Founder: Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family
E-Mail: john@truedevotions.ie
Website: www.truedevotions.ie