



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It is the month of June when we remember the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and celebrate in a special way the love of God for us, especially as expressed through the life, sufferings and death of His Son, Jesus.

In earlier times, especially in the Middle Ages, devotion was rather to the wound in the side of Christ and that event appears in the Gospel passage from John which we proclaim on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. In later times, particularly arising from the visions of St. Margaret Mary, the emphasis shifted more to the Heart of Jesus, as a symbol of the love of Jesus and hence of God for us. St. Margaret Mary belonged to the Visitation Convent at Paray-le-Monial in France, where she died in 1680.

John's Gospel features several 'signs' which express the meaning and significance of Jesus' life as God speaking to us through him in a special way. Among those signs by Jesus would be the changing of water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana or the feeding of the 5,000 people on the mountain. Other signs include the healing of the cripple beside a pool, the restoration of sight to a blind man and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Each one has a spiritual meaning beyond the physical healing which took place.

The piercing of the side of Jesus is another 'sign' and is not mentioned in any of the other three gospels.

Blood and water

This sign occurs after the execution of Jesus by crucifixion and being nailed to a cross – a common Roman punishment for criminals. Normally, crucified people could survive for several days on the cross and it was a custom of the Romans to leave the bodies for an indefinite period, as a deterrent to other possible criminals. However, with the approach of the Sabbath, the Jews could not allow the bodies of the executed to be left beyond sunset. Hence, the two other criminals executed with Jesus had their legs broken to hasten their death. But, when they came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead. He had already suffered so much from the scourging and the crowning with thorns. However, to make sure, one of the Roman soldiers pierced the side of Jesus – and his heart.

John then reports that blood and water flowed out from the opening in the side of Jesus. Medically speaking, this was not a strange phenomenon, but for John it has special significance. It is another special 'sign' pointing to the meaning of the work and mission of Jesus. Already in his gospel, water and blood have been established as signs of salvation.

In His interview with Nicodemus, Jesus had said: "No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." (John 3:5). An obvious reference to Baptism. Then in His discourse on the Bread of Life, Jesus had said: "If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life... Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him" (John 6:53-54,56).

In describing the water and blood flowing from the side of Jesus, it is likely that John expects his readers to link the 'sign' with Baptism and the Eucharist, the two main sacramental celebrations of the early Church. And this is the common interpretation of the Fathers of the Church.

I present these questions for reflection. Am I faithful to my Baptismal Promises? What idols do I have, worship, attach myself and give my time? Do I really believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist? Do I spend some time in contemplation of the Loving and Sacred Heart of Jesus? One who is faithful to one's baptismal call and one who adores and believes in the Real Presence of Jesus becomes a true witness in the community to build, to love, to forgive and to be merciful.

Fr. Jerald D'Souza, ocd
Provincial Delegate



Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him, and He will act.

Psalm 37:5

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We are called by the Church in the month of June to focus on the Sacred Heart of Jesus that desires and longs for intimacy and union with each one of us. We ask ourselves as Teresian Secular Carmelites how can we come to a deeper understanding of the Heart of Jesus that the Church calls us to contemplate this month.

As Teresian Secular Carmelites we turn to Our Holy Mother Saint Teresa, and Our Holy Father St. John of the Cross, for light, guidance, and sustenance in this quest.

St. Teresa teaches us that divine intimacy and union with the Heart of Jesus begins and develops by deepening our “friendship with the One we know loves us” through the life of prayer. The inspiration we seek as Secular Carmelites is found within this deep friendship with the Lord, and compels us in love forward on our spiritual journey.

Our Holy Father St. John of the cross recommends to us that for those who truly aspire to intimacy and union with God that the sure way and path is through the theological virtues. It is the life of faith that always reveals the Lord to us. It is faith that enables us to gaze in prayer with love on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This past year it has been the Sacred Heart of Jesus that has taught us about the third theological virtue of hope. Over the year of the pandemic, we have experienced long periods of isolation, lockdowns, and stay-at-home orders. We have missed our communities, our churches, our families and friends. It seems as if it will never end!

In the midst of these experiences if we continue to be constant and faithful to our friendship with the Lord through prayer rooted in faith, and do not take our eyes off the light of His unfailing love emanating from His Sacred Heart we will not lose our way. It is not enough that we practice faith and love, we must practice hope, leaning on His strong arm. Through our hope and trust we share in His strength.

Like the Book of Canticles, the bride comes out of the desert (pandemic) by not only the luminous path of faith, and the sweetness and delights of charity, but also supported on the arm of the Beloved, the arm of hope. Not just once but day after day we must pray for fresh strength by the constancy of our hope in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. *Let us commit our way and spiritual journey these days anew to the Lord, trust and hope in Him, and He will act.* Psalm 37:5

In Carmel,

Gladys McMullin, ocds
President, OCDS