

July 9, 2017

Heart of the World XXX

Last week, we turned our attention to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Just like when we discussed Our Lord's Sacred Heart, we began with the symbolism.

The heart (as it is understood Scripturally) is the very core/center of one's being. It is our deepest essence and reality. From it flows all emotion (especially love) and all virtue. It is the "Garden Enclosed" (Song of Songs 4:12) where we meet God and God meets us.

Both Jesus and Mary reveal their exposed hearts to us. Hearts are not normally exposed to say the least. That leaves them vulnerable to be injured, rejected, abandoned, or betrayed. However, they are willing to risk these sufferings so that we may have total access to their deepest selves.

There are four main symbols of Mary's Immaculate Heart. Her Heart itself, the fire, the sword(s), and the 'crown' of roses.

Last week, we talked about how in giving her heart to us, Mary exercises a maternal influence on us. By her example and assistance, she *internally inspires* us to strive to love as she loves. She makes us *want* to be better men and women.

The fire coming from the top of her heart is the same flame of love that we see coming out of Jesus' Sacred Heart. This Love warms, purifies, inspires, and heals us. Also, with Mary this Love (which is Divine "stuff") is uniquely hers because she is espoused to the Holy Spirit and the two will become one flesh. (Gn. 2:22-24) To think of Mary without thinking of the Holy Spirit (or vice versa) is inconceivable.

The other two symbols are the sword(s) and the 'crown' of roses.

When Mary brought Jesus to the Temple to fulfill the obligation of redeeming Him (our Feast of the Presentation), Simeon prophetically spoke of a sword that will pierce her heart that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. (Lk 2:25-35) This is the first Sorrow of the tradition of Our Lady of Sorrows—usually depicted as seven swords piercing her heart.

The rest are: 2) their flight into Egypt, 3) the loss of Jesus in the Temple; 4) Mary watching Jesus suffer and carry the cross, 5) standing by Jesus and keeping Him company at His crucifixion; 6) receiving into her arms His spent, limp, and cold Body after the crucifixion, 7) burying Jesus' Body in the tomb.

By being willing to bear these grievous sorrows (and *many* others!) out of love for God and us, she allowed God to act in time and space. She allowed the miracle of the Incarnation of Our Lord. His coming forth from Heaven to save us.

The 'crown' of roses is deeply related to the sword(s). It speaks of the beauty of her Love, her humility, (all of her virtues) and her true Queenship. It also speaks of the hidden suffering of perfect Love. Inside those roses are thorns.

Fr. Michael