

Feast of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart

Reflection by Sr. Mary Lou Wirtz

June 8, 2018

Happy Feast day! We gather today to celebrate a feast of the Church but also a special feast of our congregation. Mother Clara named us Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. For us it's more than a title...it is a relationship of communion, heart to heart. Paraphrasing M. Clara's words in her Founding Constitution, we honor these hearts by bearing witness to and striving after perfect love in all we do in our service and strive to integrate the contemplative and active life.

This devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary was very popular at the time of M. Clara. The devotion stemmed from the revelations of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary in the 17th century. In an apparition Jesus said to her: "Behold the heart that has loved humanity so much and has been so little loved in return."

I'm quite sure we are all familiar with the images of these Sacred Hearts--the Heart of Jesus is shown with a flame arising from its center and a crown of thorns around the heart, whereas Mary has a sword piercing her heart. Both images communicate a message of deep love born through suffering. Whether we hold the traditional images or the more contemporary ones, this feast day is a reminder that the images of the Sacred Hearts are a mirror of what our own hearts look like when we open ourselves to love. Our heart is also our capacity to be touched and to be wounded.

Today's first reading from Hosea is filled with images of a loving, compassionate God. Our loving God is like a mother who gathers the child in her arms, raises the child to her cheeks, stoops to feed the child...and with the warm tenderness and compassion of love says, "My heart is overwhelmed!"

The second reading is a familiar one from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He wants us to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge! In knowing this love, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. Such richness! This is the love of the Sacred Heart, who poured out his life for us on the cross, as reflected in the Gospel.

Teilhard de Chardin stretches our thinking further when he speaks of the cosmic Christ being born from the Sacred Heart. He writes: "The great secret, the great mystery is this: there is a heart of the world and this heart is the heart of Christ." For him this Sacred Heart was not only the love of Jesus for humanity, but this love was a unifying force upholding the universe. The Sacred Heart is what loves looks like.

The heart is the symbolic center of each of us. It is the place of encounter, where God reveals God-self to us, where we come to know God. When we say, "Someone has a big heart" or "a kind heart", we are experiencing an inner virtue that is becoming visible to us. We recognize a warm heart that radiates compassionate love.

Let us radiate and mirror this love to others!