

**HOMILY SHML 6-7-24      Feast of the Sacred Heart**  
**Hosea 11.1,3-4,8c-9; Eph 3.8-12,14-19; Jn 19.31-37**

What is the greatest feast for you? Like many, I love Christmas, Jesus' birthday, with all the carols and decorations, etc. And I love Easter, Jesus' rising, with all the Alleluias, Spring flowers, etc. However, my favorite is the feast of the Heart of Jesus. Why? Because it is all about the love of God, and love is at the root of Christmas, Easter and all the mysteries of the life of Jesus. For God IS love, and we sing "love makes the world go round." Our Founder Father Leo Dehon wrote that "the Heart of Jesus, the love of Jesus, is the whole gospel." This is the first and most important devotion, focused on God, not focused on me, or any of my concerns about sin, or mercy or forgiveness. It fulfills all the commandments and the prophets.

Some may think devotion to the Heart of Jesus is just all about Margaret Mary. However, our first reading reports that God's heart is moved with a tender love, for God is like a loving parent to each of us, holding us and drawing us to his cheek and feeding us. This was written more than 700 years before Jesus. This is the God Jesus calls his Abba, his Daddy. Pope Pius XII in his encyclical on Sacred Heart devotion "Haurietis Aquas" (You Shall Draw Water) urges us to go back further and deeper to understand devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

God has always had a heart for us, but only in Jesus does God take on a human heart, the source and center of Jesus' love for the Father and the Spirit, and for all of us. In our gospel we're told a soldier came to the cross, opened Jesus' side and pierced his heart with a lance, and "they shall look on him whom they have pierced" (Zec 12.10). This is the beginning of devotion to the five wounds and the open heart of Jesus. From Jesus came blood and water, our symbols of baptism and the Eucharist. Fr. Dehon said, "The heart of God opens to you in the heart of Jesus." In the Haiti art section of the Milwaukee Art Museum is a little painting of a crucified black Jesus. Kneeling on each side is a woman garbed and veiled in white. The title of the piece is "Adoration of Love." That is what this mystery of the life of Jesus calls us to, a lifestyle of adoration.

In our second reading, St. Paul tells us that through faith we need be rooted and grounded in love, to know the height and depth, the breadth and length of the love of Christ. His love has no bounds: Jesus welcomes religious leaders but also

heretics and foreigners, and even pagan invading soldiers. He embraces those his society considered property: slaves, children and women. He welcomes sexual sinners and criminals. He touches the unclean: shepherds, lepers, physically and mentally ill, and even those possessed. He accepts his apostles who'd abandoned and denied him, Paul who persecuted him, and he even prays for and forgives those who torture and execute him.

Fr. Dehon was rooted in this love and said it transformed his life. Repeating Galatians 2.20, he said, "I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." This is the faith that gives us joy.

From this we know Jesus has a place in his Heart for every one of us, too. We can savor this and let ourselves be held by him. We can spend a few moments each day just reflecting on how Jesus loves us. When we thus know the love of Jesus for us, we want to love Jesus in return and offer him our hearts. His love moves us to open our hearts to love his people and his earth as he does. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus today is not a bunch of devotions, or pious exercises, but an oblation, a return of love for love. Our SCJ logo, a heart on a cross open to us and to all, shows us who Jesus is, and who we are to be.

In Eucharist now, let us look on him whom we have pierced and let the love of Jesus touch us so deeply that we give thanks and love as he loves.

**Father Jim Schroeder, SCJ**