

Christian character of our homes. It was expressed in a variety of ways, which can be summarized as the desire that Christ be Lord of our homes, that the effects of the Holy Eucharist we celebrate in our parish church be realized in our homes.

“This desire is, in many ways, the most important result of the Diocesan Synod, for the foundation of the Church’s life is the family. It is in the family that Christ first comes to us, instructs us in the truth, teaches us to pray and leads us in the way of holiness. From strong Christian homes, united in the parish, the diocese and the universal Church, the grace of salvation reaches to every part of the world” (Diocese of La Crosse, *Times Review*, October 11, 2000). The Enthronement of the Sacred Heart is a fitting means to address this and other desires of the Synod.

Isn’t the devotion to the Sacred Heart just another devotion?

Many families and individuals currently practice different devotions, have strong habits of prayer, and receive the sacraments frequently. It may appear that an additional devotion, such as that to the Sacred Heart, is therefore unnecessary. Even though many do have such a sound spiritual life, the devotion to the Sacred Heart can only make such a life even stronger, more clearly focused on Christ.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart is, furthermore, the “summary of all our religion” (Pope Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*), “the summary of the whole mystery of our redemption” (*HA*, n.86). Rather than competing with other devotional practices, that of the Sacred Heart complements them perfectly by, in a sense, encompassing them. On this point Pope Pius XII writes, “Let no one think, however, that by such a practice anything is taken from the other forms of piety with which Christian people, under the guidance of the Church, have honored the divine Redeemer” (*HA*, n.122). Also, some devotions that are expressly promoted by the Church are for this reason more commendable. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council explained: “Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, *above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See. Devotions proper to individual Churches [i.e., dioceses] also have a special dignity if they are undertaken by mandate of the bishops according to customs or books lawfully approved*” (n.13, emphasis added). Since the devotion to the Sacred Heart has been clearly “ordered by the Apostolic See” and promoted by the Diocese of La Crosse, this devotion should not be considered just another devotion.

What is the enthronement ceremony?

Although the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart constitutes above all else a new way of life in Christ, this life is initiated by the ceremony of Enthronement. Each ceremony is similar, whether in a parish, a business, a school, or a home. For a family enthronement, the family makes arrangements with a priest, a qualified lay promoter of the

Enthronement Apostolate, or engages in self-study from instruction materials to prepare for the Enthronement. If possible, the family attends Mass in the parish as an act of love and reparation during the time of preparation and especially on the day of the enthronement. The family is encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for Mass and Communion. Preparation may also include the daily Rosary, a Litany of the Sacred Heart, or reflection on the Scriptures. A statue or picture of the Sacred Heart is procured and a place of honor or “throne” is prepared in the home representing an altar in the home. There should be room for a Crucifix, candles, flowers and the Bible.

The steps in the ceremony are: 1) an opening hymn (optional); 2) a brief introduction on the meaning of the Enthronement; 3) a reading from the Word of God; 4) intercessions on behalf of the world and the family; 5) the blessing of the image (if this has not been done prior to the ceremony); 6) the placement of the image of the Sacred Heart and the Bible in the place of honor; 4) the recitation of the Apostles’ Creed; 5) the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart; 6) a closing prayer; 7) a final blessing and dismissal; 8) a closing hymn (optional).

In the days following the ceremony, the family renews its covenant daily, spends time as a family in prayer before the image of the Sacred Heart, and tries to have at least one person from the family attend daily Mass.

Who can have the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart?

The principal consideration for having the enthronement is the salvation of souls. While in most situations the enthronement will be a source of great grace for the family, if some minimum requirements are not present, the enthronement may be detrimental. If the enthronement is to take place in a family home, there should exist, for example, a valid marriage, that is, one recognized by the Church. Also, at least one of the spouses should be a practicing Catholic. Finally, the family itself must have the general intention of living according to God’s will and of abiding by the teachings of the Church. Apart from these minimum conditions, all are encouraged to enthrone the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

How do I learn more about the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart?

If you are interested in the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart, contact your pastor first. You may also request materials and other information from the Sacred Heart Apostolate, www.sacredheartapostolate.com, or from the Office of Sacred Worship of the Diocese of La Crosse (608-791-2674; email: ccarstens@diolc.org).



Frequently Asked Questions about the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

What is the *devotion* to the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

Every devotion approved by the Church is founded upon a doctrine of the faith. We believe, for example, that Mary is the Mother of God, *Theotokos*. We maintain, based on this doctrine of our faith, devotion to Mary and show this devotion or love by various practices, such as the Rosary and the *Angelus*. Again, we believe that Jesus is present body, blood, soul, and divinity under the appearances of bread and wine in the Eucharist. Consequently, Catholics possess a unique love of and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament which is evident in the devotional practices of Eucharistic Adoration and processions.

The Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, like other devotions, is based upon another doctrine of the faith, perhaps the greatest of all: “God is love” (1 John 4:16). As Pope Pius XII explained, the devotion to the “infinite love of God for the human race...demands of us a complete and unreserved determination to devote and consecrate ourselves to the love of the divine Redeemer, whose wounded heart is its living token and symbol” (*Haurietis Aquas* [=HA], nn. 20, 6). In other words, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is nothing other than the devotion to the love of God which is symbolized in the heart of Christ.

What is the origin of the devotion to the Sacred Heart?

While many consider the origin of the Sacred Heart devotion to be found in the private revelations of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the 17th Century, the Church teaches that its true origin is to be found in Scripture itself. Keeping in mind that the *object* of the devotion is the “infinite love of God for the human race” (*HA*, n.20), it is clear that this love was present from the beginning. While the writings of the Old Testament do not mention the Sacred Heart itself (and for obvious reasons), nevertheless, “it cannot cause us surprise nor in any way lead us to doubt the divine love for us which is the principal object of this devotion; since that love is proclaimed and insisted upon in the Old and New Testament...” (*HA*, n.23). The love of God for mankind was

expressed most beautifully by the prophet Hosea: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.... Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them” (11:1, 3-4). In the New Testament, the divine love of God for mankind becomes incarnate in the person of Jesus: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

In the course of the Church’s history, the devotion to the love of God (the central tenet of our faith) underwent development until it received its most definitive support by the Church after the revelations made by Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque from 1673-1675. But as Pope Pius XII reminds us, “It must not be said that this devotion has taken its origin from some private revelation of God and has suddenly appeared in the Church.... [T]he revelations made to Saint Margaret Mary brought nothing new into Catholic doctrine. Their importance lay in this: that Christ our Lord, exposing his Sacred Heart, wished in a quite extraordinary way to invite the minds of men to a contemplation of, and a devotion to, the mystery of God’s merciful love for the human race” (*HA*, nn. 96, 97).

What is the *Enthronement* of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

“The Enthronement is the official and social recognition of the rule of the Sacred Heart of Jesus over the Christian family, a recognition affirmed, outwardly expressed and made permanent by the solemn installation of the image of that divine Heart in a conspicuous place in the home, and by the Act of Consecration” (Fr. Mateo Crowley-Boevey, *Jesus, King of Love*, p.125). As Cardinal Raymond L. Burke explains: “The enthronement is bound essentially to the Holy Eucharist, for it aims to bring Christ, truly present on the altars of sacrifice and in the tabernacles of our parish churches, into our homes. It aims to link the altar and tabernacle of the parish church with the altar and tabernacle of devotion in the home. The whole meaning of the devotion is to extend the grace of the Eucharist into the Christian home and from the Christian home to all the world.

“The image of the Sacred Heart expresses the true Kingship of Christ who rules over us by giving up his life for us. It daily reminds each member of the family to follow in Christ’s royal way by making reparation for sins committed and by striving to serve God and neighbor more lovingly.

“The image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is enthroned to signify that Christ is he who gives inspiration and direction to each member of the household. The enthronement is a single act, but it represents a way of life by which each member of the household is transformed in Christ each day” (Diocese of La Crosse, *Times Review*, October 11, 2000).

What is the origin of the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart?

As Pope Pius XII has shown, the object of the Sacred Heart devotion—the love of God symbolized by the Heart of Christ—is present in the Scriptures themselves. The worship paid to the Heart of Christ then gradually developed through the centuries. Saints like Bonaventure (c. 1274), Albert the Great (c. 1200-1280), Gertrude (c. 1292), Peter Canisius (1521-97), Francis de Sales (1567-1622), and John Eudes (1601-80), who petitioned for the liturgical feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, are some of those who promoted this devotion. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation nun from Paray-le-Monial, France, gave the devotion its greatest impetus when she received numerous private revelations from Jesus. From these revelations there are discernable “12 promises” made by Jesus to those who devote themselves to his Sacred Heart. The third promise, “I will bless every house in which the picture of My Heart shall be exposed and honored,” inspired Father Mateo Crowley-Boevey in 1907 to begin, at the command of Pope St. Pius X, the apostolate of the Enthronement, installing the image of the Sacred Heart in as many homes as possible.

Isn’t the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart a devotion of the past and no longer relevant today?

The goals of the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart are 1) to increase worship of God, especially of his Heart, 2) to increase our belief in the merciful love of God, 3) to offer love to God in return for his infinite love for us, 4) to make reparation for the sins of ourselves and others, and 5) to increase our love for and reception of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. In sum, the purpose of the Enthronement is to help us to live a life centered on Jesus Christ in the home, in school, at work, and at recreation. Only if living this type of life—a life centered on Christ—is a “thing of the past” is the Enthronement irrelevant today.

Didn’t the Second Vatican Council render such devotions obsolete?

While the Second Vatican Council taught clearly that the Mass was the “source and summit” of the Church’s life, by no means did it intend to ban devotions. The Council states: “Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See. Devotions proper to individual Churches [i.e., dioceses] also have a special dignity if they are undertaken by mandate of the bishops according to customs or books lawfully approved” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 13). Rather than detract from the participation at Mass, the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart, when rightly understood and practiced, will deepen participation in the Mass. Again, some of the objectives of the Enthronement are to increase our love for the Eucharist, to foster greater connection between the domestic church and parish church, and to live the Christ-centered life after receiving him in the Eucharist.

What have the popes said about the devotion and consecration to the Sacred Heart?

Popes throughout the most recent century have encouraged devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) wrote two encyclicals about the Sacred Heart, *Annum Sacrum* (On Consecration to the Sacred Heart, 1899) and *Mirae Caritatis* (On the Holy Eucharist, 1902). Pope Leo XIII also consecrated the entire human race to the Sacred Heart on June 11, 1899. Following his pontificate came Pope St. Pius X, the pope who, when Father Mateo asked permission to carry out the work of the Enthronement, told him: “Not only do I permit you, but I command you to give your life for this work of social concern.” Other encyclicals of the popes include *Caritate Christi Compulsi* (On the Sacred Heart, 1932), *Miserentissimus Redemptor* (On Reparation to the Sacred Heart, 1928) and *Quas Primas* (On the Feast of Christ the King, 1925) by Pope Pius XI; and *Haurietis Aquas* (On Devotion to the Sacred Heart, 1956) by Pope Pius XII.

More recently, Pope John XXIII recorded in his autobiography *Journal of a Soul*, “Every time I hear anyone speak of the Sacred Heart of Jesus or of the Blessed Sacrament, I feel an indescribable joy.... I am determined to give myself no peace until I can truly say I am absorbed into the Heart of Jesus” (cf. pp. 157-8). Pope Paul VI, in an Apostolic Letter of 1965 on the Devotion to the Sacred Heart (*Investigabiles Divitias Christi*) said: “This, therefore, seems to us to be the most suitable ideal: that devotion to the Sacred Heart—which, we are grieved to say, has suffered somewhat in the estimation of some persons—now reflourish daily more and more. Let it be esteemed by all as an excellent and acceptable form of true piety, which in our times, especially because of the norms laid down in the Second Vatican Council, must be rendered to Christ Jesus, ‘the king and center of all hearts, who is the head of his body, the Church...the beginning, the first from the dead, that in all things he may have first place’ (Col. 1:18).” Pope John Paul II, on the centenary of the consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart, emphasized the relevance of the devotion today. He said, “The man of the year 2000 needs Christ’s Heart to know God and to know himself; he needs it to build the civilization of love” (n. 1). These are but a few of the many words promoting the devotion to the Sacred Heart by the popes.

Why is the Diocese of La Crosse promoting the Enthronement?

Apart from the fact that the devotion to, and Enthronement of, the Sacred Heart of Jesus are approved and desired means by the Church to honor God, our local church of the Diocese of La Crosse has also encouraged such practices. Such encouragement emerged at the celebration of the Fifth Diocesan Synod, celebrated from June 11-14 of the Jubilee Year 2000. Reflecting on the Synod, Cardinal Burke said: “One of the strongest desires expressed during the preparation and celebration of the Fifth Diocesan Synod was to safeguard and foster the